



# ...OF THE CHURCH

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STANDING IN THE GAP LECTURESHIP

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## PREFACE

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What a great blessing it is to be a part of the Nesbit church of Christ family. We have been blessed by working with the congregation as a Memphis School of Preaching family in 2007-2009, and now by the invitation to work with the congregation as her preacher.

I am indebted to Trey Bledsoe for his guidance and help in this project and to the whole congregation for their love and support to accomplish this great work.

This year's theme lends itself to a great study of topics surrounding the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible reveals to us God's Will for mankind concerning salvation and godly living. By this study, we soon realize that God has not left man to his own devices, but rather has given unto us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3).

May this study be a blessing to all for the ages to come.

Wayne Rodgers

*Editor*

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# THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

*Daniel F. Cates*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. The Lord's church is known by many names in Scripture, and most of those will be the focus of this study as will, briefly, some of the names for those composing the church.

2. Three things should be considered before getting into the lesson proper.

A. The word "church" itself is a sort of name for the Lord's body showing that those so described are separated from the world!

1) The Greek word is ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*) from a combination of the Greek preposition for "out of" and the Greek verb for "call"; these literally are called out of the world and into Christ!

2) 1 Peter 2:9, "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"

3) Galatians 1:6, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:"

B. Does a name matter?

1) What if someone came up and called you by another man's name?

2) How must God feel when one claims to be His but takes some man's name or a name drawn from some misused Bible concept?

C. "To nominate" means "to name"; "to denominate" also means "to name," but adds the Latin prefix "de" meaning "from, away from, of, out of" (dictionary.com app); consider, then, that God has nominated, or named, His church, while men, moving away from God's standard have denominated, or named, their churches--their denominations.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **I. THE CHURCH IS NAMED THE "WAY."**

A. Jesus is "the way."

1. John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

B. After Him, the church also was referred to as the "way."

1. Acts 22:4, "And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women."

C. This is why individual members are called "disciples," followers.

1. Acts 9:26, "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple."

## II. THE CHURCH IS NAMED "GOD'S BUILDING."

A. Jesus is the "foundation" and "chief cornerstone."

1. 1 Corinthians 3:11, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
2. Ephesians 2:20, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*;"

B. The church, then, is His building.

1. 1 Corinthians 3:9, "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building."

C. This is why individual members are called "lively stones."

1. 1 Peter 2:5, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

## III. THE CHURCH IS NAMED "THE HOUSE OF GOD" AND "THE FAMILY."

A. In Scripture, the First Person of the Godhead is called "the Father," and the Second Person of the Godhead is "His Son," our brother.

1. 2 Peter 1:16,17, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father

honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2. 1 John 1:3, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."
3. Hebrews 2:11, "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,"

B. The church, then, is "the house of God," the "family" of God.

1. 1 Timothy 3:15, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."
2. Ephesians 3:15, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,"

C. This is why individual members are called "brethren."

1. Acts 15:23, "And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:"
2. Note that this is not a title as some would use it, but it is about a display of a relationship--no one brother or sister is any more so than another!

#### IV. THE CHURCH IS NAMED "THE BODY."

A. Jesus is "the head of the church."

1. Ephesians 5:23, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body."

B. A head must have a body, that is the church.

1. Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence."
2. 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

C. This is why individual members are called "members."

1. Romans 12:5, "So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."
2. 1 Corinthians 12:12, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ."
3. For this body to be healthy, every member, beautiful or not, must do its part (1 Cor. 12:14-27).



## V. THE CHURCH IS NAMED "THE TEMPLE OF GOD."

A. Jesus is the "great high priest."

1. Hebrews 4:14, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession."

B. The church is His temple.

1. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are."
2. Ephesians 2:21, "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:"

C. This is why individual members are called "priests" and "saints."

1. Revelation 1:6, "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."
2. 2 Corinthians 13:13, "All the saints salute you."

## VI. THE CHURCH IS NAMED "GOD'S HUSBANDRY" AND "THE FLOCK."

A. Jesus is "the good shepherd."

1. John 10:14, "I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine."

B. The church is "God's husbandry" and "the flock."

1. 1 Corinthians 3:9, "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building."
2. Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

C. This is why individual members are called "sheep."

1. John 21:16,17, "He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

## VII. THE CHURCH IS NAMED "THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST" AND "THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD."

A. Jesus purchased the church with His blood.

1. Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

B. The church belongs to Jesus Christ, so it is referred to as His possession.

1. Matthew 16:18, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
2. Romans 16:16, "Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you."
3. 1 Timothy 3:15, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

C. This is why individual members are called "Christians."

1. Acts 11:26, "And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

## VIII. THE CHURCH IS NAMED "THE KINGDOM."

A. Jesus is "the King of kings."

1. 1 Timothy 6:15, "Which in his times he shall shew, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;"

B. The church is His kingdom.

1. Colossians 1:13, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son:"
2. Luke 22:16-18, "For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide *it* among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come."

C. This is why individual members are called "fellowcitizens."

1. Ephesians 2:19, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;"

## CONCLUSION:

1. This discussion has shown numerous names given the Lord's church, and those composing it, in Scripture.
2. Does this mean every church given any of these names is the church of the Bible? No, because the identifying characteristics of the church of the Bible are as important as the name itself!
3. Note that no attention has been made to "the name of the church" in the authoritative sense ("in the authority of the church"), because the church is not the authority – the problem with denominationalism is that it makes churches the authority--but they are not! (Matt. 16:19, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and

whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.")

A. There is a vast difference, then, between being baptized "in the name of Christ" and being baptized by the authority of a religious group [to be added to that group and not to Christ]!

# THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

*Gary Colley*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. The church of Christ is made up of those who are called out of the world by the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14; Romans 1:14-16).
2. The church of Christ is also called the kingdom of Heaven since the Head is seated at the right hand of God in Heaven (Col. 3:1).
3. It is the most important institution ever established on the earth! (Acts 2).
4. It is perfect and cannot be improved upon! (Hebrews 12:28).
5. The power of Him who stilled the tempest, healed the diseased, and raised the dead is the power that operates through the Word of God to bring salvation to those who will hear, believe, repent, confess Jesus as Lord, and be baptized.

## DISCUSSION:

### I. NO HUMAN HEAD

- A. The church of Christ does not have a human head as some proclaim!
- B. Jesus is the founder, purchaser, builder, and Savior of the churches of Christ (Romans 16:16; Ephesians 5:23-25).
  1. Paul wrote about the “falling away”, that was already lifting its ugly head in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

2. It was already being formed in the first century (Acts 20:29-32; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10).
3. The only Head of the church of Christ is not the Pope of Rome, nor any other human on earth, but all authority is under the headship of the Son of God who was raised from the dead to reign (Acts 2:32-33; Ephesians 1:22-23).
4. The human body cannot move or act without the approval of the head!
5. So it is with the church built by Jesus, all authority must come from Him! (Ephesians 5:23-24).
6. Errors of Gnosticism, Spiritism, Ceremonialism, Asceticism, and other false philosophies, evidently were troubling the Colosse church.

## **II. JESUS IS THE EXALTED HEAD OF HIS CHURCH**

- A. Paul labors in this epistle to give a just view of the exalted position which Jesus possesses as the Head of His church (Acts 20:28).
- B. He shows Him to be the exactness of God in Being and perfection (Hebrews 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15).
- C. He put all things under his feet, making Him to be head over all things, including executive, legislative, and judicial, and constituted Him Head of the church!
- D. We are commanded to hear only Him (Matthew 17:5).
- E. He has been made the head of the body the church by God's decree (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18).

F. It is supreme arrogance for anyone to claim that they have equal or superior authority with Jesus, the Christ!

### **III. THE CHURCH, THE REALM OF THE SAVED**

- A. The church of Christ is the realm of the saved.
- B. All the saved are in the church of Christ, and none outside the church are the children of God and therefore among the saved (Acts 2:41, 47).
- C. Outside of the realm established by the Lord, life is removed!
- D. There is only ONE church that God made through His Son, the church of Christ (Matthew 16:13-19; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23).
- E. When the term is Biblically used, it is not referring to a denomination or just a part of anything.
  - 1. The body or church of Christ is NOT “non-denominational” (meaning all denominations); but rather, **UNDENOMINATIONAL**.
  - 2. When some say, “Well, this view is narrow and exclusive”, they are right!
  - 3. When some think we are trying to be pompous by saying what the Bible says about the church, they are wrong.
  - 4. We simply want to be the church of Christ as it was under inspired men in the first century (John 16:13).



#### IV. "UNDENOMINATIONAL"

A. Let us explain.

B. Those who were added to the church of Christ on the day of Pentecost, when the church was established, had no denomination to which they could "join" themselves, either by "joining" or by being "voted into."

C. If you had been present on the day of Pentecost, would you have obeyed the Gospel so that you could be added by the Lord to the church of Christ as they were added that day (Acts 2:38-41, 47)?

#### CONCLUSION:

1. All spiritual blessings are to be found in Christ Jesus, that is, in His body which is His church (Ephesians 1:3, 22-23).
2. These blessings include forgiveness, redemption, salvation, and the privileges of prayer and other blessings of worship (Colossians 1:13-14).
3. Thus, we see the essentially of being members of the church of the Lord where these blessings only are found.
4. Through Paul, our Lord says, "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).
5. Let us obey while yet we may!

# HE PLAN & PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

*Clifton Angel*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. "Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:13-19, ASV).
2. Let's note some of the details from the above passage:
  - A. Jesus' church would be built upon the rock-solid foundation of the gospel.
  - B. The Person of Jesus is the good news (gospel); for, it is He who would die, be buried, and be resurrected to save the world.
  - C. Jesus' church is also called His kingdom.
  - D. The apostles were given the keys (authority) to unlock the doors to the kingdom (establish Jesus's church).

3. There are identifying marks which assure us that Jesus's church was built on Pentecost day – 50 days following His resurrection.
  - A. It would come during the lifetime of the apostles (Mark 9:1, KJV).
  - B. The kingdom would come with power – authority (Mark 9:1).
  - C. The apostles would be in Jerusalem when they received power (authority) from God (Luke 24:49).
  - D. The good news (gospel) would be preached, beginning in Jerusalem.
  - E. It is upon the solid foundation of the gospel (good news) that Jesus said He would build His church (and He would give to His apostles the keys (authority) to the kingdom (church)).
4. Reading the record of Acts 1-2, one will find:
  - A. The apostles present.
  - B. The apostles receiving power (authority) from on high.
  - C. The apostles preaching the good news (gospel) of Jesus.
  - D. Saved souls being added to the church.
  - E. Herein was the kingdom of Christ – the church of Christ – established, and the doors were opened.
5. However, many false teachers distinguish between the kingdom and the church.

- A. In summary, they teach, "Because Jesus was rejected by the Jews, He could not set up His earthly kingdom in Jerusalem."
  - B. "Therefore, He established the church as a an interim, if you will, until He can return and setup His kingdom with success."
  - C. A large body of teachings (many conflicted) have developed because of the mistake many make of seeing the church as a separate entity from the kingdom.
  - D. Their teachings make the church an afterthought – an event which was unplanned and without great purpose.
6. However, the Scriptures teach that the church is hardly an afterthought.
7. In fact, according to the Scriptures:
- A. The church of Christ is the grand plan of God.
  - B. The church of Christ has the greatest purpose from God.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **I. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS THE GRAND PLAN OF GOD.**

- A. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4).
- B. The church was predetermined according to God's will (1:5).
- C. Throughout the history of creation, God's plan for the church was being accomplished (1:9-11).

1. God had in mind the church when He created the first day (Gen. 1:1-5).
2. God had in mind the church when He destroyed the world with a flood and saved Noah and his family in the ark (Gen. 6-8).
3. God had in mind the church when Abraham was called out from his kindred (Gen. 12:1ff).
4. God had in mind the church when the Passover was first commanded (Exo. 12).
5. God had in mind the church when the Israelite congregation was brought out of Egyptian bondage (Exo. 12-14).
6. God had in mind the church when He designed the tabernacle (Exo. 25-27).
7. God had in mind the church when He led the Israelite congregation out of the wilderness and into the land of promise (Jsh. 1-3).
8. God had in mind the church when He granted the building of the temple to Solomon (1 Chr. 22:6-10).
9. God had in mind the church when He prophesied through Isaiah (Isa. 2:2-4).
10. God had in mind the church when He prophesied through Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34).
11. God had in mind the church when He crafted Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2).
12. God had in mind the church when He prophesied through Micah (Mic. 4:1-3).

13. God had in mind the church when He prophesied through Joel (Joel 2:28-32).

D. God's eternal purpose in the church was previously a **mystery**, but now it is **manifested**.

1. "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:1-6).
2. "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (3:11).

E. We are not an afterthought in the mind of God.

1. Why, then, is the church of our Lord so often an afterthought in our minds?
2. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

F. The church was not designed in the mind of man.

1. The church is not a product of our hands.

2. Yet, the church has been given into our hands, in the sense that we are to carry out the commission given to it and the work assigned to it.
3. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel (**the bedrock foundation of the church, CA**) to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

G. The church is you and me, who have been added by the Lord (Acts 2:47).

1. Therefore, when we read what God says about the church, we need to make it personal.
2. And, when we read what God says about the church, we need to make personal application.

## II. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST HAS THE GREATEST PURPOSE FROM GOD.

A. Many, even Christians, wander through life aimlessly, not realizing that they have the greatest purpose right in front of them (and inside of them).

1. The greatest purpose is: **the church of Christ**.
2. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

B. However, it would not be satisfactory to just say: "The purpose of the church is the church," so let us consider some details given by Paul.

1. In the church of Christ is found: the **forgiveness of sins** (Eph. 1:7; 2:1, 4; 2:8-10).
2. In the church of Christ is found: **fellowship with God** (2:11-19).
3. In the church of Christ is found: **the family of God** (2:19-22; 4:1-16).
4. In the church of Christ is found: **the glorifying of God** (1:12; 1:14; 3:21).
  - a. We need to be glorifying God in our **walk** (4:17-5:16).
    - i. Be informed, not ignorant (4:17-18, 20-21; 5:1, 6-10; 2 Tim. 2:15, 3:15-17).
    - ii. Be conscientious, not callous ("past feeling") (Eph. 4:19a, 24; 5:11-16).
    - iii. Be spiritually pure, not sensually corrupt (4:19b, 22-23; 5:3, 5).
    - iv. Be content, not covetous (4:19b, 28; 5:3, 5; Heb. 13:5-6).
    - v. Be mindful of your words, not a liar, nor a destroyer (Eph. 4:25, 29-30, 5:4; Col. 4:6; Jas. 3:1-12).
    - vi. Be resilient, not resentful (Eph. 4:26-27, 31).
    - vii. Be kind (4:32a).
    - viii. Be compassionate (4:32b).
    - ix. Be merciful (4:32c).
    - x. Be sacrificial (5:2).



- b. We need to be glorifying God in our **worship** (5:17-21).
  - c. We need to be glorifying God in our **homes** (5:22-6:4).
  - d. We need to be glorifying God in our **work** (6:5-9).
  - e. We need to be glorifying God in our **war against Satan** (6:10-18).
5. In the church of Christ is found: **the fulfillment of Christ** (1:22-23).

## CONCLUSION:

1. Are we doing our part to fulfill God's grand plan?
2. Are we doing our part to fulfill the greatest purpose from God?

## WORKS CITED

The Holy Bible. American Standard Version. *Electronic*.

The Holy Bible. King James Version. *Electronic*. Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural quotations are from this source.

# LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

*Billy Bland*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. Hopefully we all are concerned with the church.

A. Concerned about its growth: “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18), “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:12-14).

B. Concerned about its purity: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

C. It's about its leadership: “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23).

2. How do we have good leaders in the church?

A. There are to be elders in every church (Acts 14:23).

B. However, congregations that are not fully organized still have need of good leaders.

- C. We need to help provide Biblical instruction as well as the right atmosphere to aid in the development of good, scripturally qualified leaders.
3. Leadership implies many things.
- A. Qualifications.
  - B. Attitudes.
  - C. Fellowship.
  - D. Teamwork.
4. Leaders must always think of the cause of Christ, not personal gain or personal victory.
- A. Christ - "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:21-23).
  - B. Paul - "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with

Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phi. 1:20-24).

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **I. UNSCRIPTURAL LEADERS**

- A. To simply call someone a leader, doesn't make him a leader.
- B. Be careful not to use worldly standards for qualified spiritual leadership.
  - 1. Good business man, leader in social club, leader in community, etc., good, but doesn't qualify one to be a leader in the church.
  - 2. Is he faithful - according to God?
- C. Some unscriptural leaders would include:
  - 1. The figure-head leader.
  - 2. The dictator.
  - 3. The forced leader (*cf.* 1 Tim. 3:1).
  - 4. The "yes-man" leader.

### **II. THE NEED OF LEADERSHIP (AND ORGANIZATION), IN THE LORD'S CHURCH.**

- A. The importance of the church:
  - 1. Established by Jesus Christ. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18, Eph. 3:9 -10, Eph. 5:25, Acts 20:28).

2. Christ is its Head. “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23).
3. God gave its organization: “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Phi. 1:1, Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5,).
4. The church has a **great** mission. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15, Matt. 28:19-20).
5. The local church is very important to you. (Think of it as your work - both local and foreign, think of your possibilities, think of the next generation, etc.)

#### B. New Testament Examples of leadership.

1. Acts 2 - apostles
2. Acts 6 - delegation of work, teamwork (all work important)
3. Acts 11:28-30 - elders
4. Acts 14:23 - elders in every church.
5. Phil. 1:1 - bishops and deacons
6. I Tm. 3, Titus 1 - qualifications of elders and deacons

7. Titus 1:5 - evangelists are to set in order the things that were wanting and ordain elders in every city.

### III. QUALITIES TO CONSIDER IN DEVELOPING LEADERS (Josh. 1:1-9).

A. Men who are in fellowship with God. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Josh. 1:5).

1. Joshua would be a successful leader because God was with Him.
2. This walk with God started long ago (one of the 10 spies)
3. Joshua and Caleb wholly followed the Lord. (Had proven himself)

B. Men who are strong. "Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them" (Josh. 1:6).

1. Leaders are men who are forced to face tough situations.
2. Difficult decisions must be made.
3. Face spiritual enemies and criticism.
4. Need to develop spiritual strength (backbone) to face difficult times (Daniel in the lion's den).

C. Men who have courage. "Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an

inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest” (Josh. 1:6-7).

1. Men, who in spite of fearful situations, have courage.
2. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13).
3. Faith is the antidote to fear (Mark 4:37-41)

D. Men who are “Men of the Book.” “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Josh. 1:8).

1. Leaders must know the Word of God.
2. Faith in its all sufficiency. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17, Acts 20:32, Psa. 119:105).
3. With so many turning to the left and to the right, we need leaders who are men who stay with the Book.

#### IV. HOW TO ACCOMPLISH THIS?

- A. Current leadership help train prospective leaders.
- B. Conduct special classes designed to train leaders. “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).
- C. Make sure the Word of God is taught in all areas of the teaching program in the church. “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2).
- D. Demonstrate (exemplify) these traits before others. “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

#### CONCLUSION:

1. God has blessed the world with great spiritual leaders in the past (Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Daniel, Nehemiah, etc.)
2. God has entrusted us with the greatest work in the world - the salvation of souls. “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26).
3. Someone has said that churches rarely rise above their leaders.
4. May God bless the church with strong, effective leadership



# THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

*Robert D. Rawson*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. Doctrine means “teachings” from God to man.
2. Are we the potter or the clay (Jeremiah 18:6)?
  - A. Totally different results from mankind being in charge.
  - B. God’s attitude and plans are present if He is the potter.

## DISCUSSION:

### I. PAUL WAS CONVERTED BY CHRIST TO BE NEW (Rom. 6:1-18)

- A. Plural pronouns “we,” “our,” and “us” are used of Paul and the Roman brethren.
- B. The new life is a new creation in activity.
  1. ...raised from burial to walk a new life.
  2. ...walking with the Lord now (vs. 17-18).
  3. ...not enslaved to the sinful ways of the past.
  4. ...now serving righteousness.
- C. Timothy was serving righteousness and peace (1 Timothy 1:18-19).
- D. Titus was living now by grace (instructions-RR) (Titus 2:11-12).

### II. PAUL WENT ON TO TEACH FELIX THE DOCTRINE (Acts 24:25).

- A. The doctrine included righteousness , temperance, and judgment to come.

B. The doctrine caused Felix to shutter.

1. Judgment and failure to practice God's doctrine causes us to shutter!
2. It was foretold to Felix about the denial at the judgment!

### III. GOD'S DOCTRINE OFTEN PRESENTED BY SYNECDOCHE.

A. Hearing for salvation.

1. Ephesians 1:14 "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

B. Believing for salvation.

1. Romans 10:10 "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

C. Repentance for salvation.

1. Acts 11:18 "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

D. Confession for salvation.

1. Romans 10:10 "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

E. Baptism for salvation.

1. 1 Peter 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:”

F. Watching and Praying.

1. Matthew 26:41 “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

G. Obeying for salvation.

1. Hebrews 5:8-9 “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;”

H. Forgiving others.

1. Matthew 18:35 “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

I. We, the Church, use this figure of speech all the time in daily life.

J. False teaching by limit to just the stated word; not reasonable or logical.

1. Hearing only, Ephesians 1:14, really?
2. Forgiving only, Matthew 18:35, really?

#### IV. WHAT DOES FALSE DOCTRINE BRING?

- A. "...God meant it unto good" vs. man's will as seen in the example of Joseph and his brothers (Gen. 50:20).
- B. "Add thou not unto his words...." (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6).
- C. "...If any man shall take away from the words... (Rev. 22:19)
- D. God's standard must be honored in every age.

## V. HOW GOD'S DOCTRINE WAS BROUGHT TO MANKIND

- A. "...For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father" (John 12:49).
  - 1. Jesus brought the word of the God from Heaven.
  - 2. The Holy Spirit brought remembrance of that word to the apostles (John 14:26).
- B. Paul wrote to Timothy, "...the same commit thou to faithful men..." (2 Tim. 2:2).
  - 1. The church was purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28).
  - 2. The doctrine of God brings mercy or rejection (1 Tim. 1:16-17)
    - a. Hymanaeus and Alexander made shipwreck (v. 20).
    - b. Elymas rejected the "faith" (Acts 13:8), became enemy of all "righteousness," perverted the "right ways of God" (v.10) and the "doctrine of the Lord" received by Sergius Paulus (v.12).

## **VI. THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S AUTHORITY BEING HONORED**

A. "To my knowledge there has been but little put in print on the subject of Generic and Specific Authority." (Roy, xiii)

1. In general, the various containers used to serve the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20ff) allows gold, brass, wood, glass or plastic.
2. However, special attention should be paid to the elements of the Supper (I Cor. 11:27).
  - a. Setting aside Divine Law allows liberalism (2 John 9).
  - b. Neglecting Divine Law falls short, while honoring God's Divine Law requires obedience.

B. GOD SENT THE HOLY SPIRIT TO APOSTLES (John 14:26)

1. He brought remembrance of teachings of Jesus.
2. He brought conviction of God's Will.

## **VII. GOD'S MESSAGE WOULD CHANGE HABITS TOWARD GOOD.**

A. Churches would do well (Romans 16:16-18).

1. Marking those teaching differently helps.
2. Those not of God often serve only self.

B. Growing is God's desire (Hebrews 5:12-14).

1. God allows time to grow.

2. God expects maturity to help others.

## **VIII. THE CHURCH IS TO TEACH THE WHOLE COUNSEL**

A. Paul was a public example (Acts 20:27).

B. Assisting others is of God (Acts 11:19-30).

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. Our study is critical to pleasing God and doing His will.

A. The verses demonstrate how crucial and important this truly is.

B. Will we make application in today's world?

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# THE PURCHASE PRICE OF THE CHURCH

*Michael J. Clarke*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. We have many times gone to the store and placed our items upon the counter to have the total tallied up.
2. At that point, the cashier would say: "The total comes to\_\_\_\_\_."
3. Imagine being told that the total came to one pint of blood.
  - A. What would you say?
  - B. How would you react?
4. Or how about you being told that your firstborn son's blood would be required to bring the balance current?
5. The church was something that did need payment.
6. The total came to the blood of Jesus.
7. Acts 20:28.

## DISCUSSION:

### **I. BLOOD OFFERING WAS ALWAYS NECESSARY TO ATONE FOR SIN.**

- A. When the first sin was committed, the eyes of man were opened to the good and the evil that exists in this world.
- B. When Adam and Eve realized that they were naked, they attempted to clothe themselves (Gen. 3:7).
- C. Yet, according to God's later action their covering was not enough (Gen. 3:21).

D. Now, while the text does not say specifically this was a blood sacrifice to atone for sins, consider what one source had to say about it:

1. The Lord clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of animals, which in all probability had been offered in **sacrifice** (Gen. 3:21).
2. Abel offered a **sacrifice** “of the firstlings of his flock” (Gen. 4:4; Heb. 11:4).
3. A distinction also was made between clean and unclean animals, which there is every reason to believe had reference to the offering up of **sacrifices** (Gen. 7:2, 8), because animals were not given to man as food till after the Flood. (M.G. Easton).

E. The following is an excerpt from Christian Courier:

1. Forgiveness in the Patriarchal Age
  - a. Though the concept of forgiveness is not predominately pronounced in the Patriarchal age (from Adam to Moses), it certainly is implied in the sacrifices of blood that were offered so frequently in that initial era of human history (*cf.* Gen. 8:20; 12:7-8, etc.).
  - b. Abel, through his more excellent sacrifice, had “had witness borne to him that he was righteous” (Heb. 11:4).
  - c. Certainly, his righteousness was not that of his own, but was imputed through his obedient faith.



- d. Job offered burnt offerings for his children in the event that they had sinned (Job 1:5).
  - e. If forgiveness was needed even in the disputes among men (Gen. 50:17), surely this implies a pardon that is indispensable if one is to stand before the holy God (*cf.* Hab. 1:13).
2. Forgiveness Under Moses
- a. The concept of forgiveness comes into full vision under the Mosaic regime.
  - b. For instance, in the early portion of Leviticus, in connection with various sacrifices, Moses records that these offerings were a “sweet savor” to the Lord (see Lev. 1:9; 2:2; 3:5, 16).
  - c. In Leviticus 4:31, the nature of that “sweet savor” is defined: “the priest shall burn [the sacrifice] upon the altar for a sweet savor unto Jehovah; and the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven” (emphasis added).
  - d. Other Old Testament texts, pledging forgiveness, are far too numerous to need recitation.
3. Forgiveness Under John’s Baptism
- a. Forgiveness was obtainable under the administration of John the Immerser.
  - b. Mark records, “John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4).

- c. Those who rejected John's baptism, at the same time "rejected the counsel of God" (Luke 7:30).
  - d. One may draw his own conclusion about the forgiveness status of those who spurned the proclamation of Jehovah's messenger (cf. Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1).
4. Forgiveness During the Ministry of Christ
- a. Jesus Christ, during his personal ministry, also forgave sins.
  - b. In the city of Capernaum, when a lame man was brought into the house where he was, the Lord said unto him, "Son, your sins are forgiven."
  - c. Then, to demonstrate to the doubting and chagrined scribes that he had the authority to forgive the man's sins, he said to the invalid gentleman,
  - d. "Arise, and take up your bed, and go to your house" (Mk. 2:5-11).
  - e. Clearly, forgiveness, at least in a certain sense, was bestowed before the death of Christ.
  - f. That being the case then, how does one explain texts such as these that follow. (Wayne Jackson)

## II. THE OFFERINGS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT COULD NOT COMPLETELY CLEANSE.

- A. The book of Galatians shows how essential it was for Jesus to die (Galatians 4:4-5; 2:21).
- B. One understands based on these passages that while the Old Testament provided a “rolling forward” of sins, it did not fully cleanse.
- C. God wanted to institute a plan that would cover **all mankind** and their sins.
- D. A New Testament (covenant) was going to come (Hebrews 9:15-17).
- E. For the majority of the rest of this study we will “camp out” in Hebrews 10.
- F. What is the text stating?
  - 1. THE OFFERINGS HAD TO BE DONE YEARLY (Heb. 10:1-3).
  - 2. THEY WERE NOT ENOUGH TO CLEANSE FULLY (Heb. 10:4).
- G. The plan was for Jesus to come.
  - 1. These sacrifices were temporary.
  - 2. How does one know this (Rev. 13:8; Isa. 53:5-7).

## III. CHRIST HAD TO PURCHASE THE CHURCH ONLY ONCE.

- A. Have you ever bought a cell phone charger?
  - 1. Or a wallet?
  - 2. Do you still have the same one that you first got?

B. What about the bill for your house?

1. That is a large bill.
2. It takes years to pay.
3. What if I paid it for you?

C. Jesus paid a great price for us.

D. *He Paid a Debt.*

1. (Verse 1) He paid a debt He did not owe. I owed a debt I could not pay. I needed someone to wash my sins away. And now I sing a brand-new song Amazing Grace. Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.
2. (Verse 2) My debt He paid upon the cross. He cleansed my soul from all its dross. I tho't that no one could all my sins erase. But now I sing a brand-new song Amazing Grace. Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.
3. (Verse 3) O such great pain my Lord endured. When He my sinful soul secured. I should have died there but Jesus took my place. So now I sing a brand-new song Amazing Grace. Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.
4. (Verse 4) He didn't give to me a loan. He gave Himself now He's my own. He's gone to Heaven to make for me a place. And now I sing a brand-new song Amazing Grace. Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay (Google).

E. The sacrifice that was made was different from the Old Testament plan.

F. Old Testament sacrifices were made repeatedly;  
Christ's was made only once (Hebrews 10:6-14).  
G. Jesus' offering was perfect.

1. SCOURGING (Mark 15:15).
2. MOCKING (Mark 15:16-20).
3. CRUCIFIXION (Mark 15:21-37).

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. What will you do knowing what was done because Jesus loves you?
2. What will you do knowing what was done because God loves you?
3. John 3:16.

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# OLD TESTAMENT PICTURES

*B. J. Clarke*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. Polaroid pictures seem so antiquated now, but there was a time when the Polaroid camera was cutting edge technology.
  - A. Rather than taking film to the photo store to develop, one could take the picture and then watch it develop right before his very eyes.
  - B. Different areas of the picture came into focus at different times, but eventually the entire picture became visible.
2. In a similar way, different writers of the Old Testament provided word pictures to describe the church.
3. As the reader journeys through the Old Testament, the depiction of the church becomes clearer and clearer.
4. There are many pictures from which to choose, but we will limit our investigation to three distinct pictures of the church found in the Old Testament.

## DISCUSSION:

### I. IT IS A KINGDOM

- A. The prophet Nathan told King David, "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and **I will establish his kingdom**. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever (2 Sam. 7:12-13).

1. The prediction is clear – after David is dead and buried one of his descendants would establish a kingdom.
2. Which Davidic descendant is in view?
  - a. The angel told Mary that the Holy Spirit would miraculously empower her to conceive and bring forth Jesus (Luke 1:26-31).
  - b. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And **he shall reign** over the house of Jacob for ever; and **of his kingdom** there shall be no end (Luke 1:32-33).

B. Jesus promised that He would give Peter “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt.16:19).

C. In the American Standard Version of Revelation 1:5-6, we read: “and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; **and he made us to be a kingdom**, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Emphasis mine, BJC).

D. Note the following implications:

1. Christ purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Those whom Christ loosed from sin by His blood, He has made to be His kingdom (Rev. 1:5-6).

2. Therefore, since the blood of Christ purchased the church and the blood of Christ made those who are washed in His blood a kingdom, the church and the kingdom are the same (Comp. Matt. 16:18-19).

E. Jesus and the apostles preached that the kingdom was at hand (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:14-15).

1. Jesus told some of those to whom He spoke that they would be alive when the kingdom came with power (Mark 9:1).
2. The power of the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4), and that is the very day upon which the kingdom came (Acts 2:29-33, 47).

F. After the day of Pentecost, the kingdom is always referred to as being in existence (Acts 8:12; Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:12; Rev. 1:9).

G. The Lord's Supper is observed within the kingdom (Luke 22:16-18, 29-30).

H. The kingdom is spiritual in nature (John 18:36)

1. It is entered by a spiritual new birth (John 3:3-5; Matt. 7:21-23).
2. True greatness in the kingdom is measured by humble service (Matt. 20:20-28).
3. The mission of the kingdom is spiritual in nature (John 6:15; 2 Cor. 10:3-4; Eph. 6:12; Luke 17:20-21).



- I. Since Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15), we, as His subjects, must acquiesce to His rule.
- J. He is on the throne. He is in charge. He is the sole monarch and legislator of the kingdom.
  - 1. We are true citizens of His kingdom when He rules and reigns over our hearts.
  - 2. At the end of time, our King, Jesus, will deliver up the kingdom to His Father (1 Cor. 15:24; 2 Pet. 1:11).

## II. IT IS AN HOUSE

- A. God told David that one of his descendants would, not only establish a kingdom, but also “build an house for my name (2 Sam. 7:13).”
- B. Solomon did build a physical house, but it was destroyed by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25).
- C. However, Isaiah predicted that another house, the Lord’s house, would be established in the last days in Jerusalem, and that all nations would flow unto it (Isa. 2:1-4).
- D. Consider again Luke 1:32, wherein the angel told Mary that Jesus would “reign over the house of Jacob for ever.”
- E. According to Paul, the house of God is the same as the church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15). Thus, since the church came into existence on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and since the church is the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15), Jesus did in fact build an house for God’s name and establish a kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19).

1. Peter wrote, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up an spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5).
2. Christ is the High Priest over His house, the church (Heb. 4:14; 10:21). Our worship to God must be accomplished by approaching the Heavenly Father through our High Priest (Heb. 10:20).
3. One house is not as good as another (Gen. 6:14; Ex. 12:1-13; Matt. 7:24-27).

### III. IT IS A TEMPLE

- A. One of David's descendants, Solomon, would build a physical temple, but neither it, nor Solomon, would endure.
- B. There would be a Davidic descendant, however, Who would be greater than Solomon, and Who would build an enduring temple.
- C. There is, of course, no material temple in the New Testament such as there was in the Old Testament.
  1. However, Paul did refer to the church as a "temple" (1 Cor. 3:9, 16-17; Eph. 2:19-22).
  2. Jesus Christ and the apostles are the foundation for this temple (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20).
  3. Moreover, Jesus is the "chief corner stone" (1 Pet. 2:6). He is "the stone which the builders disallowed" and yet He has been "made the head of the corner" (1 Pet. 2:7).

D. Christians are the “living stones” which are builded together into the temple of God (1 Pet. 2:5). Therefore, the strength of the local church depends upon the strength of the living stones who make it up.

E. Just as the Old Testament temple had to be built according to the pattern, which was given by the Spirit (1 Chron. 28:11-12, 19), so must the New Testament temple, the church, follow the pattern given by the Spirit (2 Tim. 1:13; Heb. 8:1-5).

1. In the Old Testament, the temple was a location for worship, and a place where God’s presence would be found (2 Chron. 7:12-16).
2. The New Testament church/temple is the dwelling place of God’s name today!

## CONCLUSION:

1. Paul provides a beautiful conclusion to our study: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the **household** of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an **holy temple** in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).
2. What a thrill it is to be in the kingdom, the house, and the temple of God!

# MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

*Jeremy Thornton*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. Before the earth was ever formed, our heavenly Father had an “eternal purpose” by which mankind could be saved (Eph. 3:10-11).
2. God “so loved” us that He would send Jesus to die for our souls (John 3:16-17), because we transgressed God’s Law and could not justify ourselves.
  - A. We required a perfect Sacrifice in order to obtain justification (Rom. 5:1) and reconciliation (Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20).
3. Christ was willing to humble himself, taking the form of a servant and became obedient unto death on the cross (Phil. 2:5ff.), and in so doing, purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28).
4. Christ promised the Holy Spirit would come and guide the apostles into all truth (John 16:13), provide the keys to the kingdom (Matt. 16:19), and thereby would establish congregations of the Lord’s body throughout the world (Col. 1:12-13).
5. The Godhead has gone to great lengths to ensure that the church of our Lord be established, and we become members of her.
6. Unfortunately, through the course of history the idea of the church our Lord prayed for (John 17:20-21) and the Bride that He died for (Eph. 5:25) has been all but erased from the minds of man today.

7. Our Master, prayed and died for one church and for us to be members of her.
8. But what does it require for us to be a member of this church, what do we do in this church, and why should I be a member of this church?

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **I. HOW DOES ONE BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH?**

A. Before one can answer how to become a member of the church, it must be stated that it is necessary to become a member of the church.

1. Jesus stated that the only way to come to the Father is through Him (John 14:6).
2. Jesus is the Savior of the body and head of the church (Eph. 5:23).
3. There is only one body/church that belongs to Jesus (Eph. 4:4; Matt. 16:16-18; 1 Cor. 12:13).
4. Anyone outside the body of Christ, teaching things contrary to the doctrine of Christ are accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

B. In order to become a member of the church one must enter properly.

1. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6 KJV)
2. "Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers:

but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John 10:7-9 KJV)

C. In order to become a member of the church one must obey the requirements given.

1. One cannot enter a gym without obeying the membership requirements.
2. Costco, or Sam's Club will not allow someone to enter their facilities unless you have obtained a membership according to their requirements.
3. The church of our Lord is more important than a gym or a wholesale membership and must be entered following the requirements.
4. Jesus requires that one must believe that He is the Christ to be a member of the church (John 8:24; Mark 16:15).
5. Jesus requires that one repents of sin (Matt. 4:17)
6. Jesus requires that one confesses He is the Christ (Matt. 10:32-33).
7. Jesus requires that one is immersed in water, putting Him on in baptism (Mark 16:16; Gal. 3:27).
8. After meeting these requirements the Lord adds the saved one to the church (Acts 2:47).

## II. WHAT DOES ONE DO AS A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH?

A. After one becomes a member by meeting the requirements what do we do?

1. Unfortunately, there are many Christians that have been taught the Gospel and obeyed it, but after their obeying the Gospel are left alone and expected to figure everything out on their own.
2. The Great Commission given to the apostles, which is the pattern we follow today (Matt. 28:18-20) commands that we teach, baptized, and then continue teaching.
3. To make disciples/followers of Jesus (Matt. 28:19; ASV), we must teach the lost about Him, and then continue to teach the newly converted, teaching them to observe all things commanded (Matt. 28:20).

B. When we are added to the Lord's church, there is work to do.

1. Those who were added to the church on the day of Pentecost "continued steadfastly."
2. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42 KJV)
3. The work that began in Jerusalem by the apostles was an important work.
4. This work had to continue.

5. There are too many Christians treating the church as a retirement community and not continuing in the work that we are commanded to do.
6. The apostles preached the Gospel beginning in Jerusalem and then went into the rest of the world as commanded by Jesus.
7. “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:47)
8. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)
9. “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;” (Col. 1:23)
10. The apostles established congregations that were to teach others, as they had been taught, continuing the work of our Lord (Luke 19:10).
11. “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

C. Jesus taught that His followers would be those that worked for Him.



1. "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)
2. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:13-16)
3. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 15:2)

D. There is work that every Christian can be doing.

1. Some are able to teach others the Gospel.
2. Some are able to visit the sick.
3. Some are able to edify members of the church.
4. Maybe one is not able to do all three of these but every person in the church can do at least one.
5. Even the elderly that cannot drive can mail cards to the erring or make phone calls to the sick.
6. One may not be able to teach someone the Gospel, but young men can visit those elderly and do yard work for them.

7. Jesus says that when we are visiting the sick and the afflicted, then we are doing His will (Matt. 25:31-46).

### **III. WHY SHOULD ONE BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH?**

A. Are there any reasons why one should become a member of the church of Christ or any advantages that come with being a member of the Lord's church that a member of a denomination may not have?

B. If one is a member of the church of Christ, they have fellowship with the Father.

1. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3)

2. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

3. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." (1 John 3:1)

C. If one is a member of the church of Christ, they have the opportunity and advantage of worshipping the Father correctly.

1. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)

2. Those in the church worship according to what God has commanded, partaking of five acts of worship, without the use of a mechanical instrument.

D. If one is a member of the church of Christ, they have access to the Father through Jesus.

1. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:" (1 John 5:14)
2. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8:34)
3. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:" (1 John 2:1)
4. "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;" (Heb. 8:1)

E. If one is a member of the church of Christ, they have the hope of an eternal home in Heaven

1. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," (1 Peter 1:3)

2. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3)
3. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10)
4. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4:7-8)
5. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the

trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

6. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14:13)

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. Thanks be to God for the church of which we are members.
2. When one is added to the church and does the work we are commanded to do, we can enjoy the blessings of being a Christian and have all confidence in the home that has been prepared for us in heaven.

# THE ONENESS AND AUTONOMY OF THE CHURCH

*Mike Hixson*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. The church revealed in the Bible existed in the mind of God before the world began (Ephesians 3:9-11).
2. It exists according to His “eternal purpose” (Eph. 3:11).
3. The church of Christ was established on Pentecost Day nearly 2,000 years ago as promised by the Lord (Matt. 16:18).
4. Jesus built the church (Matt. 16:18), and purchased it with His divine blood (Acts 20:28).
5. The Lord only built one church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4).
6. Biblically speaking, the church of Christ exists in the universal sense (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23-25), and in the local sense (1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1-2; 1 Thess. 1:1; Rev. 2-3).
7. The church universally and locally is governed by the authoritative words of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18; 17:5; Col. 3:17).
8. The local church, while under the authority of Christ, is autonomous in nature.
9. For the duration of this lesson, we want to examine the assigned subject, “The Oneness and Autonomy of the Church.”

## DISCUSSION:

### I. THE ONENESS OF THE CHURCH.

- A. The Bible speaks of the origination of the church.

B. The Lord Jesus founded the church that wears His name.

1. Jesus built the church in accordance with the will of the Father (Eph. 3:9-11; Matt. 16:13-19).
2. Jesus bought the church in accordance with the will of the Father (Eph. 3:9-11; 5:25; Acts 20:28).

C. The Lord Jesus is the foundation of the church that wears His name.

1. Jesus is the foundation and chief cornerstone of the church (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:19-20).

D. The Bible speaks of the organization of the church.

E. The New Testament provides a blueprint of the organizational structure of the Lord's church (1 Tim. 3:15).

1. The word church denotes "the called out," and consists of people who have been called out of darkness unto Christ (1 Pet. 2:9; Col. 1:12-14).
2. "It has two applications to companies of Christians, (a) to the whole company of the redeemed throughout the present era, the company of which Christ said, "I will build My Church," Matt. 16:18, and which is further described as "the Church which is His Body," Eph. 1:22; 5:23, (b) in the singular number (e.g., Matt. 18:17, RV marg., "congregation"), to a company consisting of professed believers, e.g., Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:13; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:5, and in the plural, with reference to churches in a district" (Vine, p. 84).

- a. Jesus is the head of the church universally (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23).
  - b. Biblically speaking, there is one head and one body (Eph. 5:23-24; 4:4).
3. The local church is a part of the universal church and is comprised of individual members (Acts 2:36-41, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13, 20, 27).
- a. Men who meet the qualifications set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-14 serve as elders or overseers of the local church.
  - b. The local church is also made up of men who meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 to serve as deacons or special servants.
  - c. Evangelists serve the local church by aiding in the public and private proclamation of the word of God (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

## II. THE AUTONOMY OF THE CHURCH.

A. The Bible speaks of the operation of the church.

B. Consideration must be given to the autonomy of the local church.

- 1. The word "autonomy" is from "autos" meaning "self" and "nomos" which denotes "law."
  - a. The idea is that each local congregation is self-governing.
- 2. There is no superstructure or world headquarters binding churches together, as is the case with Catholicism and denominationalism.



- a. Nowhere in the Bible do we read of the need for any type of pope or council to govern the church on earth.
  - b. Jesus Christ is the only head of the church and the way He governs His divine body is through His inspired word (II Tim. 3:16-17).
  - c. We have preserved in Scripture the last will and testament of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:15-17).
3. In order for the local church to maintain autonomy and oneness in the brotherhood, adherence to the law of Christ is demanded.
- a. Every congregation is subject to the law of Christ (Matt. 28:18; 17:5; Col. 3:17).
  - b. This is achieved when we “all speak the same thing” (1 Cor. 1:10).
  - c. The message Paul and the apostle’s preached was the same “in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17).
  - d. Autonomy and oneness are the result of faithful brethren striving to “walk by the same rule” (Phil. 3:16).

C. Application must be given to the autonomy of the church.

- 1. Congregations are bound together by the doctrine of Christ (Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2 John 9).
- 2. No congregation has the right to be insubordinate to the authority of Christ (Matt. 28:18; 17:5; Col. 3:17).

3. That being said, the autonomy of the church is reflected in the realm of expediency.
  - a. Elders and congregations of God's people have been given the latitude to exercise their own judgment in the realm of expedients.
  - b. Christians are to assemble each first day of the week for corporate worship (Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).
  - c. The Scriptures do not mandate a specific time of worship. Therefore, it is in the realm of expediency that elders determine the time or times of meeting.
  - d. Furthermore, the place where the saints assemble is left to the discretion of the eldership or membership, if no eldership exists. They can lease space or purchase a building for meeting.
  - e. The Lord commands His people to reach the lost via the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).
  - f. How this is accomplished is up to the leadership of a local congregation. They can choose to reach people through radio, television, internet, the printed page, gospel meetings, etc.
  - g. Another congregation cannot dictate how a sister congregation fulfills the Great Commission. However, sister congregations can work together in reaching the lost domestically and internationally.

- h. Local congregations can and should work together for the cause of Christ.
  - i. The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch, and the record says, “Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (Acts 11:23).
  - j. The saints in Antioch “determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: Which they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:29-30).
  - k. In like manner, the local church can be supportive of mission endeavors either at home or abroad.
  - l. When natural disasters occur, whether fire, flood, earthquake, etc., the church can send assistance and manpower to help.
4. While the local church is autonomous, no congregation can usurp the authority of Christ and infringe upon matters of faith.
- a. Under the guise of autonomy, a congregation does not have the authority to decide to expand the role of women in public worship (1 Tim. 2:8-13).
  - b. Furthermore, a congregation cannot install women as elders or deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-13).

- c. Local congregations do not have the right or authority to change the terms of admission into the body of Christ (Acts 2:36-41, 47).
- d. Elders do not have the authority under the autonomy of the church to bring the instrument into worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16-17).
- e. Would it be a violation of congregational autonomy for sister congregations to voice concern and caution brethren who go beyond the doctrine of Christ?
- f. Absolutely not.
- g. We have the responsibility of warning unfaithful brethren (Ezek. 33).

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. The church reflects the wisdom and power of God.
2. Prayerfully, we will respect the organizational structure of the church and maintain unity, bringing glory to God (Eph. 3:21).

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# THE PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH

*Cameron Freeman*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. Practice is defined as: to carry out, to apply, to do or perform often customarily, or habitually, to be professionally engaged in (Merriam Webster).
2. When we think of the term “practice” several familiar thoughts come to mind:
  - A. Athletes who desire to excel in sports have to participate in sports practice.
  - B. Many young Christians often attend some type of musical or band practice afterschool.
  - C. Those who are involved in the literary arts may have to practice for a school play.
  - D. Those who participate in Bible –bowls must practice learning and answering Bible-related questions effectively.
3. The term “rehearsal”, which is a similar concept, comes to mind as well.
4. Both terms express that which is often repeated and stressed because of an inherent importance.
5. The New Testament reveals that in the first century the church of Christ was habitually engaged in certain practices that allowed for it to grow, glorify God, and receive God’s instructions and blessings.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **I. THE CHURCH PRACTICED PREACHING THE RESURRECTED CHRIST**

- A. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an undeniable fact of the gospel message (1 Cor. 15:1-4).
- B. The apostle Paul would use Christ's resurrection as the foundation for "Christianity" (1 Cor. 15:5-22).
- C. Many of the sermons and messages that we read about in the book of Acts proclaimed the resurrected Christ:
  - 1. On the day of Pentecost Peter used many Old Testament Scriptures to show that Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecies written by the prophets, one of which was the prophecy concerning His resurrection and exaltation (Psa. 16:8-10; Acts 2:22-32).
  - 2. Peter in speaking to another audience affirmed that God's Son Jesus Christ was glorified, delivered, killed and raised, and that he and the other apostles were witnesses of those very things (Acts 3:13-15).
  - 3. The religious leaders, especially the Sadducees were grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus "The" resurrection from the dead (Acts 4:1-2):
    - a. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, spirit, or angels (Matt. 22:23; Acts 23:8).

- b. They were grieved (Gr. *diaponeo* to be troubled, to toil through, to be worried, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.)
- 4. While standing before the officers and captains who had arrested them, the apostles defended the fact that the God of their fathers raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 5:26-30).
- 5. Peter's message to the house of the gentile centurion Cornelius was centered upon Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was crucified by the Jews, but raised up the third day by God (Acts 10:36-40).
- 6. Paul's synagogue sermon on the Sabbath day in Antioch of Pisidia contained certain undeniable facts about Jesus (Acts 13:14-30):
  - a. Jesus was a descendant of King David (v. 23).
  - b. Jesus is Israel's Savior (v. 23b).
  - c. John the Baptist was not the Savior although He baptized Jesus and prepared the way for Him (vs. 24-27).
  - d. Jesus was crucified although He was innocent (v. 28).
  - e. Jesus' life and death were part of something "that was written" concerning Him (v. 29).
  - f. Jesus was raised from the dead by God (v. 30).
- 7. In Thessalonica Paul reasoned, opened, and alleged concerning Christ (Acts 17:1-3):
  - a. Christ's sufferings were of necessity.

- b. Christ was raised from the dead.
- c. The Jesus that Paul preached was Christ.
- 8. Paul's famous sermon on "Mars Hill" contained the fact that the judgment of all humanity is guaranteed based on the resurrection of "that" man (Jesus, Acts 17:22-31).
- D. Christ's resurrection was not a "point of emphasis" that was preached annually or on a special day it was the very foundation of the messages that were preached by the apostles.
- E. The church of Christ in modern times must continue to practice preaching the resurrected Christ and the importance of the resurrection as it pertains to eternity (1 Cor. 15:1-58).
- F. The church also focused on sharing this information about Jesus wherever they went.

## **II. THE CHURCH PRACTICED EVANGELISM**

A. Evangelism is defined as :

1. To evangelize is to proclaim the good news of the victory of God's salvation.
2. Evangelism is the noun denoting that activity (Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology).
3. Thus, evangelism is described as the proclamation of the good news of salvation that God accomplished through Jesus Christ that results in one being saved from past sins and having eternal hope.



- B. The Old Testament prophecies concerning the church pictured the church as being evangelistic (Isa. 2:1-3; Micah 4:1-2).
- C. The New Testament reveals that evangelism contained the sharing, spreading, and defense of the gospel message.
- D. The “Great Commission” was the charge that laid the foundation for the importance of the church’s evangelistic endeavors (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16).
- E. Luke’s historical account known as “The book of Acts” emphasizes the evangelistic aspect of the church:
1. Jesus promised that the gospel would be spread beginning in Jerusalem, then in Judea, then in Samaria, and finally in the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8).
  2. The first gospel message after Christ’s resurrection was preached in Jerusalem (Acts 2:14-40).
  3. Because the church preached Christ daily, the church was rapidly growing (Acts 4:1-4).
  4. Jesus Christ was preached daily in the temple and in every house (Acts 5:42).
  5. Because of the daily proclamation of the gospel the number of the disciples multiplied, even so that a great number of the priests were converted to the faith (Acts 6:1, 7).
  6. The church was persistent in evangelism even amidst persecution and being scattered (Acts 8:1-4):

- a. God's people went everywhere:
    - i. Wherever Christians travel, move to, are employed or vacation to they should be evangelistic.
    - ii. The gospel is powerful everywhere (Rom. 1:16-17).
  - b. God's people were preaching the word
    - i. God's Word must be the standard when studying with people.
    - ii. God's Word must be handled carefully as to help people come to the knowledge of salvation (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Tim. 2:1-5).
7. Philip had great success preaching the gospel in Samaria (Acts 8:5-13).
  8. God was even interested that one soul be taught the gospel (Acts 8:26-40).
  9. The first record of the gentiles being a part of the church was not because they were invited to a gospel meeting, but rather the gospel was brought to them (Acts 10:5-6, 19-48).
  10. Bible students are familiar with "Paul's missionary trips" that are recorded in the book of Acts:
    - a. Paul's first missionary trip (Acts 13:1-14:28).
    - b. Paul's second missionary trip (Acts 15:40-18:22).
    - c. Paul's third missionary trip (Acts 18:23-21:15).

d. These missionary trips were for the express purpose of spreading the gospel message, thus spreading the borders of the kingdom of God (Dan. 7:13-14).

11. The book of Acts closes with Paul being in Rome testifying about the kingdom of God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 28:16, 23, 31).

F. Evangelism was a personal and practical part of the Christian's life in the first century.

G. A study of the book of Acts will help us to see the importance of evangelism from God's vantage point:

1. Evangelism is not simply the preacher's job.
2. The numerical growth of the church is dependent upon evangelism.
3. Evangelism does not have to be a collective group effort done on a particular Saturday.
4. Evangelism on many occasions ended up with people not being converted to Christ
5. Evangelism always included preaching the Word of the Lord and Jesus Christ.

H. The gospel that saved was also the motivating message that encouraged Christians to live holy and righteous lives before God and in the world (Rom. 6:1-4).

### **III. THE CHURCH PRACTICED LIVING RIGHTEOUSNESS**

- A. God's grace was demonstrated in Christ's death at Calvary (Rom. 5:6-8; Heb. 2:9).
- B. God's grace teaches us about righteous living (Titus 2:11-15).
- C. The world in which the church exists today is a world filled with sinful practices, crime, gross immorality, homosexuality, pedophilia, moral laxities, etc....
- D. Christians must counter the behavior of the world by living according to the standard of the New Testament:
  - 1. Christians must first recognize that obedience to the gospel gives us influence (1 Tim. 1:12-16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Matt. 5:13-17).
  - 2. We continue to exert that influence by living holy lives (1 Pet. 1:15-16; Gal. 5:22-25).
  - 3. In order to be Holy, the Lord's church must recognize sin as sin (Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-11; Col. 3:5-9).
  - 4. Neither can the Lord's church afford for its "leaders" to blur the lines of righteousness and unrighteousness (Acts 20:28-31; 2 Pet. 2:1-2; Jude 3-4).
  - 5. Christians must be resolved in knowing that the Bible is God's Word and it helps us to be godly (2 Tim. 3:15- 4:1-4).
- E. The Church of Christ in the twenty first century must continue to be evangelistic, proclaim the resurrected Christ, and behave in a way that glorifies God and exposes ungodly behavior.

## CONCLUSION:

1. Many people, even some in the body of Christ refuse to believe that New Testament Christianity can exist in modern times.
2. When the Lord's church continues to practice those fundamental elements of the faith as those in the first century did, the world can see that undenominational Christianity exists (Eph. 4:1-6).
3. Let us refuse to conform to the world, the weak and beggarly elements of the world, denominationalism, world religions, sinful practices, but let us conform to the Scriptures and be the church that Jesus promised to build and that which he purchased with his own blood (Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 2:6-23; Rom. 16:16-18; Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 20:28).

# HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

*Keith A. Mosher, Sr.*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. The church of Christ (i.e. the “called-out who belong to Christ”) began in AD 33 on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 2:1ff.).
2. God’s prophets had predicted this event (Isaiah chapter two; Daniel chapter two; and Joel chapter two).
3. Jesus had predicted this same day and time (Mark 9:1; Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:8; cf. Acts 2:1-4).

## DISCUSSION:

- I. IN THE FIRST PERIOD OF CHURCH HISTORY THE CHURCH WAS TO BE ONE BODY WITH ONE HEAD.**
  - A. The church was founded on Pentecost and guided by inspired men (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 1:20-21; 4:4; John 14-15-16;).
  - B. A terrible price was paid to purchase the church or the called out (Acts 20:28).
  - C. In organization (Phi. 1:1); in doctrine (Gal. 6:16); and in practice (Col. 3:17) every congregation was to speak the same things and be unified in mind and practice (1 Cor. 1:10).
  - D. There was, however, an unusual prophecy given by the inspired men who guided the first century churches before the Bible was written. Those apostles and New Testament prophets predicted that a “falling away” would come (Acts 20:29-31; 1 Tim. 4:1-4; 2 The. 2:1-8) and that the apostasy was already at work in their day!

## II. IN THE SECOND PERIOD OF CHURCH HISTORY APOSTASY OCCURRED.

- A. The apostasy would be characterized (and was) by “doctrines of demons,” “forbidding to marry and abstaining from meats” (I Tim 4:1-4; compare Catholicism); by changes in organization (compare all denominations); false teaching (any religion except for New Testament Christianity-John 14:6); and gnosticism (2 The. 2:1-8).
- B. Note the following: (Taken from class notes from Memphis School of Preaching, 1975.) In AD 120 “holy water” was introduced to the church. In AD 140 a fasting period of forty days called Lent began to be practiced. In AD 154 vicarious baptism for the dead (still done by the Mormon church) became doctrine. In AD 220 the doctrine of purgatory was introduced. In AD 250 “clinical” baptism (the forerunner to pouring and sprinkling) was practiced by some. In AD 257 hallowed priestly garments were being worn. In the AD 200’s the “sign of the cross” was introduced. In AD 305 celibacy for priests became doctrine. In AD 320 lighting candles in place of prayers took place. In AD 325 the first “ecumenical” council occurred and the first creed was introduced. In AD 341 monks and nuns were introduced. In AD 380 prayers for the dead and to the dead were allowed. In AD 385 transubstantiation was taught. In AD 394 the Lord’s supper became a daily “mass.” In the same century, Mary was “recognized” as a mediatrix or go-between as one talked to God and she became the “mother of God!” In AD 526 extreme unction was practiced as a “church”

doctrine. In AD 593 the apostate church decided that purgatory only erased “venial” sins. In AD 600 Latin was the only language allowed in worship and prayer; prayer to Mary was also authorized. **In AD 606 the first “pope” was recognized and the titles pope and bishop were given to such men. In AD 666 the first instrument was used in worship!** In 709 the kissing of the pope’s toe was required of all who

approached him. In AD 750 the pope was granted temporal power over the church. In AD 786 icons of “saints” were to be venerated. In AD 850 holy water was recognized as a doctrine of the church and not just a tradition. In AD 869 church tradition was said to be authoritative, but somewhat lower than the Bible. (This would change, K.M.) In AD 890 the “college of cardinals” was established. In AD 965 the baptism of bells began to be practiced. In AD 998 dead saints were “canonized.” In AD 1054 the Roman church and the Greek church separated. In AD 1073 celibacy was promoted for priests. In AD 1096 the first crusade began. In AD 1112 the pope was to be recognized as over all the churches. In AD 1123 celibacy for priests was now church law. In AD 1190 the selling of “indulgences” was introduced. In AD 1214 the rosary was introduced. In AD 1215 confession to a priest was introduced and the same year transubstantiation became church law. **In AD 1229 “laymen” were forbidden to read the Bible and the Inquisition began.** In AD 1245 the doctrine of purgatory becomes church law. **In AD 1311 sprinkling becomes an approved method of “salvation.”** In AD 1545 tradition was



accepted as equal to Bible teaching. In the same year the Apocryphal writings (uninspired materials, K.M.) were accepted by Catholicism as canonical books. In AD 1854 the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary was introduced. In AD 1870 the pope was said to be infallible when *ex cathedra*. In AD 1950 Mary was declared to have been “assumed” to the right hand of God. She is now considered to be a co-mediator with Christ.

C. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:8, Christ will destroy all such evil as above when He comes in judgment.

### **III. IN THE THIRD PERIOD OF CHURCH HISTORY A REFORMATION WAS ATTEMPTED.**

A. The Reformation efforts were under the leadership of Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, Philip Melancthon, John Calvin, John Knox and others.

B. The effort was intended to reform the Catholic church, but instead the denominations as we know them today had their starts.

C. The “Catholic” church seems, officially, to have begun in AD 606 with Boniface II as the first pope. This group was the end result of all of the apostasy that had occurred in those first six centuries since the church of Christ had begun (Acts 2).

D. The “Lutheran” church began about 1521 by the followers of Martin Luther who is on record as telling them not to call themselves such.

- E. The “Presbyterian” church began about 1535 in Switzerland by John Calvin.
- F. The “Episcopal” church, sometimes known as the “Anglican” church also began about 1535 when Henry VIII succeeded in placing the church of England under his control.
- G. The “Baptist” church originated in 1607 under the teaching of John Smythe.
- H. The “Methodist” church was founded about 1729 by John Wesley, but he was more charismatic than Anglican as modern Methodists are. Wesley believed he had an “inner light” directly from God.
- I. The “Seventh-day Adventist” church began in 1843-44 by William Miller and later was led by Ellen G. White.
- J. “Mormonism” was started in 1830 by Joseph Smith along with the help of Sydney Rigdon, who had been a companion of Alexander Campbell. It is claimed that Smith was illiterate.
- K. “Jehovah’s Witnesses” were organized in 1879 by Charles Taze Russell known as “Pastor” Russell. Russell was tried in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania (and convicted) of stealing funds from the Watchtower Society.
- L. “Christian Science” was founded in 1866 by Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy. She “thought” she was spiritual.
- M. The “Assembly of God” (and various Pentecostal groups) began around 1900.

#### **IV. IN THE FOURTH PERIOD OF CHURCH HISTORY A RESTORATION EFFORT BEGAN.**

- A. The restoration efforts were different from the reformation movement, for the aim of restoration preachers not to reform the existing corruption of denominationalism, but to establish, again, New Testament Christianity on the earth by returning to New Testament authority for all practices in church worship, organization, and doctrine.
- B. Such efforts had their beginnings in Scotland, even in England and Europe, and were brought here by denominational preachers who began to question what they were doing as compared to what the New Testament taught. Men such as John Glas and Robert Sandeman, the Haldane brothers (all from Scotland), James O'Kelley on the east coast of American (late 1700's), Abner Jones and Elias Smith of New England, Barton W. Stone of Kentucky, Thomas and Alexander Campbell of western Pennsylvania (later Virginia); Walter Scott of eastern Ohio, etcetera plead for a return to biblical doctrine.
- C. Their goal was to be what New Testament believers were – no more and no less. They desired to “speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent.” (The latter quote was said by Thomas Campbell at a meeting in the home of Abraham Alters in 1811.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

1. The primitive, pristine church was like a clear spring of water would be at its source.

2. In a very short time, however, that “spring water” became muddied by the doctrines of men and the result was Catholicism and Protestantism to such an extent the original church could not be found on earth.
3. Men tried to reform the “stream” of Catholicism and Protestantism, but their efforts just made the “water” more like a sewer.
4. So, some decided to return to the source, the New Testament, and to restore the original – New Testament Christianity.
5. If one does what the New Testament folks did to become Christians and keeps doing what they did to be faithful, would not one be saved and ready for heaven? If not, why not?

# WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

*Keith A. Mosher, Sr.*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. Worship is biblically defined as “kissing the hand towards” (Greek-*proskeuneo*) or service as of a priest (Greek-*litergeo*; See John 4:24 and Romans 12:1.) Under consideration in this sermon is *proskuneo*.
2. It seems that the church has done a good job of discovering that the New Testament authorizes only five acts of worship: praying, giving, singing, preaching, and praying. (See Colossians 3:17.)
3. One thing that is needed is some teaching on what one should be *thinking* when worshipping and this sermon is designed to look at four areas of thought that need to be present when approaching God: *peace, power, purity, and perpetuity*.

## DISCUSSION:

- I. **THOUGHTS OF PEACE ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY WHEN WORSHIPPING GOD.**
  - A. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa. 26:3).
  - B. Philippians 4:6-7. There is a perfect peace.
  - C. Note Matthew 5:21-26. One must be at peace with brethren in order to worship God.
  - D. Note 1 Peter 3:1-7. One must be at peace with one’s mate in order to worship God. Jesus added: “Salt is good: but if the salt has lost his saltiness, wherewith

will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another” (Mark 9:50).

- E. There is a psychological exercise that can be done to achieve a temporary state of peace of mind, but real peace comes from a right relationship to God and there is no other way (John 10:10). Jesus said to those on the “limited commission” that when they were invited into a house: “And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it not be worthy, let your peace return to you” (Mat. 10:13). Those who did not listen to God’s Word about the Messiah were said to have rejected the peace that had been offered.
- F. God’s people died in “peace” or “security” (Hebrew-*shalvah*; Gen. 15:15). And, Jesus came to earth to bring “peace” (Greek-eirene, unity or concord; Mat. 10:34) but it is a peace different from man’s ideas. Jesus’ peace results in being one with God and one’s fellow man. Otherwise there is discord.
- G. Under the Mosaic system there were peace offerings in worship (cf. Lev. 3:1). Keil notes that this offering is more correctly understood as a “thank-offering” or “saving offering” (Commentry on the Penteteuch, “Leviticus” 298). The peace offering culminated in a sacrificial meal as distinguished from the burnt offerings and sin offerings (Ibid.). The peace offering was understood as a “wholly uninjured” offering and amounted to offering one’s *integrity* to God (Ibid. 298-299).

H. To be at peace with God, then, is a matter of great importance in worship and those who come before Him in some state of turmoil are without spiritual integrity.

## II. THOUGHTS OF POWER ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY WHEN WORSHIPPING GOD.

- A. Genesis 1:1. The universe was created and is no accident.
- B. The mathematical probability that this universe just “happened” is such a monstrous impossibility that one cannot believe such. It is also the case that it is a scientific fact that something cannot come from nothing. How powerful is the One who can speak and immediately things exist?
- C. Note Genesis 2:7 and Hebrews 11:3. [This power in God’s “voice” is contained in scripture (Rom. 10:17; Eph. 6:17; 2 Tim. 3:16.) The Word of God is a living, powerful message.]
- D. Think of the evolutionary idea that life started on planet earth in a primordial “soup” and such organic “miracles” produced anything!
- E. Yet, this powerful God has deigned to love man and sacrifice for man and desires that man worship Him. That such a powerful God can enjoy and desire communion with His creation should be a strong incentive to worship Him in spirit and in truth for He seeks such (John 4:23-24).
- F. See Matthew 6:13 and note the word *power* which is a translation of the Greek word, *dunamis*, which term

indicates *ability*. God is able to exist without man, but desires that man seek Him. Jesus came to make such power known (Mark 12:24).

G. The Chronicler wrote: “Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all” (1 Chr. 29:11).

### **III. THOUGHTS OF PURITY ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY WHEN WORSHIPPING GOD.**

A. This part of the sermon is an exegesis of the fifty-eighth chapter of the great book of Isaiah.

B. Isaiah was instructed by God to make the prophet’s message loud and clear (Isa. 58:1).

C. Note the Hebrew parallelism in verse one above, for God to repeat the order to Isaiah to “cry aloud” and to “lift up his voice like a trumpet” was saying the same thing twice in order to emphasize how important the message was and how certain Isaiah should have been about its truth.

D. God told Isaiah that the prophet’s sermon should start with a description of the way the Jews of that day came to worship “as a nation that did righteousness,” but in reality, were hypocrites (Isa. 58:2).

E. The mindset, of those ancient worshippers, was described to Isaiah by God so that the prophet would have an insight into the Jew’s improper thoughts in worship (Isa. 58:3).



- F. God then told Isaiah what was occurring in the minds of the Jewish worshippers (Isa. 58:4).
- G. God had never chosen such a mindset for worshippers (Isa. 58:5).
- H. God chose a mindset that came to worship to give and left worship to give (Isa. 58:6-7).
- I. God knew that there were great blessings that resulted from worshipping from the right frame of mind (Isa. 58:8-11).
- J. God also knew that true worshippers were “rebuilders” and would be filled with great delight (Isa. 58:12-14).

#### **IV. THOUGHTS OF PERPETUITY ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY WHEN WORSHIPPING GOD.**

- A. Revelation 14:13. Why are the “dead” blessed? Because they “died in the Lord.”
- B. But, where are such “dead” ones when they leave this world? They are in a place where: “. . .they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest” (Rev. 15:3-4).
- C. Note from the above passage that heaven is a place of *worship*.

- D. If one does not look forward to worship in the assembly of the saints in this world, how would he react in a place where worship is forever? I have often said that heaven is “church all day long,” although there is no time element in that place.
- E. As a Christian, I must have the mindset that I am a priest of God and have come to worship, glorify, and exalt the Almighty in prayer, song, the Lord’s supper, giving, and hearing and reacting to the sermon (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5-9).
- F. Illustration: Do you enjoy classical music? (Put here whatever kind of music you do not enjoy and ask yourself what you know about that genre.) The more one knows about a subject, the more one can enjoy it.
- G. Learning how to worship and learning to love worship are two goals of every Christian that are necessary in order to pay proper homage to God. When I die “in the Lord,” I want to be ready to enjoy heaven and not to feel out of place there because I never enjoyed worship here. [In fact, I probably will not get there if I am an unhappy worshipper here.]

## CONCLUSION:

1. When one comes to bow before God and to pay homage to His majesty, one must come with a *peaceful* mindset and one must be at peace with God and one’s fellowman.
2. When one comes to worship, he needs to be aware that the God who has the *power* to speak a universe into existence is still the God who seeks man to honor Him.

3. The Christian who worships God cannot be a hypocrite whose thoughts are that the worship time is interfering with that disciples' life-style and work habits. But the child of God must come with a *pure* heart.
4. And, the child of God who does not enjoy the worship of God here, can hardly expect to enjoy heaven where adoration of God occurs in *perpetuity*.
5. A Christian's thoughts are important in life but especially in worship (cf. Phi. 4:8).

# THE DESTINATION OF THE CHURCH

*Joseph A. Ruiz*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines destination as: "the purpose for which something is destined...a place to which one is journeying or to which something is sent."
2. The Hebrew writer put it this way: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. **But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God hath prepared for them a city**" (Heb. 11:13-16). Here, we have described the destination of the church - heaven!
3. Paul assures us that "if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, **eternal in the heavens.**" (2 Cor. 5:1).
4. Revelation 21:1-4. Here we see the first heaven and earth give place to the new heaven and earth, the dreaded sea will be no more, and the new Jerusalem will come down out of heaven from God. God will dwell with His people, and be their God, death will be no more, every tear will be wiped by God's own finger from every eye. There will be no more mourning, nor crying, nor pain.

## DISCUSSION:

### I. HEAVEN WILL BE A CITY, A COUNTRY AND A PLACE OF ACTIVITY NOT MADE BY HUMAN HANDS.

#### A. Heaven is a place whose architect and builder is God:

Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

1. Jesus stated to His broken-hearted disciples, to whom He had announced His imminent departure: “Let not your hearts be troubled...I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:1-2).
2. Shortly after this promise, Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives, as His amazed disciples looked on!
3. Since then, Jesus has been preparing dwelling places for His children to occupy in the sweet by and by.
4. These dwelling places will be part of the city known as heaven, whose walls are of jasper, and gates of solid pearl which swing open on hinges of gold.
5. It does not get old with the years of time. Its inhabitants no man can number.
6. The angels of God are its guards and the saints of God are its citizens.

#### B. Heaven will be a place of activity, as well as of rest.

Revelation 7:15 states the children of God “will serve Him night and day in His temple.” Revelation 22:3 expresses it in these words: “His servants shall serve

Him.” Indeed, the best life both now and in eternity is one filled with service. However, we will also “rest from [our] labors” (Revelation 14:13).

## II. HEAVEN WILL BE A PLACE OF SECURITY, OF NO TEARS AND NO DEATH.

A. **Insecurity** is the most prevalent of all human fears. Of all the desires of normal minded people, **security** surpasses all of them.

B. However, there is no absolute security here on earth. There is nothing permanent here on earth.

C. Remember this, we cannot take what we have here with us to the other world.

1. Job said, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord...” (Job 1:21)
2. Paul told Timothy: “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” (1 Tim. 6:7).
3. Jesus taught His disciples of to: Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves do not break through and steal.” **Heaven is the only place of absolute security.** Let us lay up our treasures there! We must stop trying to make this earth our final destination! (Luke 12:16-21).

**D. Heaven will be a place of no tears.** Millions of tears have been shed on earth through the millennia of time. Many thousands of parents have wept, times without number, because of a wayward son or daughter that left the church for the pleasures of the world.

1. Parents of the prodigal son in Luke 15 probably shed gallons of tears concerning him. They must have asked one another many times: "Where is our wandering boy tonight?"
2. Hundreds of wives have wept over wayward husbands and scores of husbands concerning wayward wives who have been unfaithful.
3. Thousands of family members have wept for weeks and months because of a death in the family: their father or mother; husband or wife or even their children have suddenly died, who were not members of the Lord's church.
4. There are other causes for tears on earth but in heaven there will never be a single tear shed for there will be nothing there to cause anyone to cry.

**E. There will be no death in heaven.** Nothing will be placed outside the house, signifying that someone has died. No funeral homes or cemeteries will exist in heaven. No hearse carrying the dead will be driven down the golden streets of heaven, and no funerals will be preached there, because death will be no more! For Christ at His coming will destroy the last enemy, that of death (1 Cor. 15:25).

- F. The sweet Psalmist, David said, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Psa. 116:15). The darkness of the night does not destroy the beauty of what we see during the day. What it does is simply hide from our eyesight the mountains, the rivers, the flowers, the scenic views, until the light of a new day arrives.
- G. In the same way, when faithful Christians pass away, their lives are hid with Christ in God, and they are not destroyed by death; they are only hid from our eyesight, until the light of a new day arrives. When death arrives for the faithful Christian, in reality we do not “lose them,” because we know exactly where they are at.
- H. There is only one fountain that talks to us with authority concerning the life to come, the hereafter. The conjectures of the pagans, the speculations of the philosophers, have nothing to offer. The only fountain that can speak to us with authority is the Bible.

### III. THE SHINING / BRILLIANT FACE OF DEATH (John 20:1).

- A. A certain truth concerning death that the Bible reveals, is that for the Christian, **death has a shining or brilliant face**. According to John 20, in the morning of the first Sunday after the death of Jesus, a group of women were making their way to the tomb while it was still dark (v. 1). Their hearts were heavy burdened.



- B. When they got to the tomb, the sun had come out, and the dawning of a beautiful day was just beginning. They found the tomb empty, and two angels informed them that Jesus had risen. The sadness of a dark night, immediately turned into a glorious day of light and immortality. Death had been swallowed up in victory; the worse despair had been transformed in eternal hope.
- C. It is by means of the resurrection of Jesus that we learn, that for the Christian death has two doors: one that serves as an entrance, and the other as an exit. One is a dark door, the other is brilliant; one of those doors, man sees, the other one God sees.
- D. When those women were making their way toward the tomb, the dark face of death overtook them. Interpreting the death of Jesus as a loss, a departure, and an end. However, when they arrived at the tomb, they quickly were able to see the other face of death: a passage by which one is transported to eternal life which God has prepared for those that love Him.
- E. When we are overwhelmed due to the passing away of a loved one, we are tempted to focus on the dark face of death. We see our loneliness, our affliction, and the loss of a relationship with someone we love so much. It is natural and just what we feel due to a broken heart. It is just that we grieve. God made us with the capacity to shed tears. True love will always feel deeply the pain of separation.
- F. Nevertheless, we should not allow the dark face of death to dominate our vision and our thoughts. God

has revealed in his Word the bright, shining face of death that we might have comfort, and understand what has happened.

G. Let us always remember that death, by the grace of God, has two doors: one that earth sees, the other heaven sees. One that serves as an exit, and the other as an entrance. The brilliant face of death is seen when we understand that death is a pathway that takes us to the fulfilment of the promise of God: Eternal Life!

#### **IV. DEATH TRANSPORTS US TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD.**

A. Furthermore, the brilliant face of death is observed when we become aware that it is the avenue that transports us to the people of God that are on the other side of this life.

B. An affirmation that is frequently used in the O.T., in relation to the death of the just and faithful, is that he “was gathered to his people.” It is used in connection with the death of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Aaron and Moses.

C. Genesis 25:8 says: “Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age...and was gathered to his people.” When Jacob was about to die, he told his 12 children: “...I am to be gathered to my people: bury me with my fathers...” (Gen. 49:29). At the moment of death, we are gathered unto our people, the people of God!

D. Death in a sense, is that door by which one is taken to a family reunion: the most precious and pleasant reunion

that has ever taken place. One can say that the people of God is divided into two groups, and that a fine veil of flesh separates the two. The two groups are the church: one part of the church is upon the earth; the other part is already on the other side of this life.

- E. Paul affirmed that those he had helped in their walk toward heaven would be a fountain of joy at the moment when our Lord would return at the end of time. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Is it not you] even in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." (1 Thes. 2:19-20).
- F. In Revelation 7:9-14, we read of a great multitude impossible to number. These are all the redeemed that are on the other side of this life. They have received the victory crown. How can one pass over to that great assembly? This multitude is composed of all the just spirits that have been made perfect by the precious blood of the Lamb when they were baptized and continued to be faithful unto death.
- G. Remember, death is not the end, but an interval: a space between two places, between life and eternity. Christians never say "*goodbye*" for the last time. Death is only a space in our being together. It is a passage that takes us to the assembly of God's people that are already on the other side.
- H. Look at it this way: Death is somewhat like looking at a loved one...he boards a plane, a ship, a train and leaves for another country. We say goodbye and see him off; while those in the other country are preparing to give

him a welcome and tell him they have been waiting for him. For us, is a departure, for them, is an arrival. For us, it is a separation, and for them, it is a homecoming.

- I. Let us trust in God, our loving heavenly Father, that He will strengthen us for the difficulties that await us. Let us look beyond the tears, through the mirror of the gospel and see the brilliant face of death. May our focus in life be always a reflection of this motto: **“Prepared to live, therefore prepared to die; prepared to die, therefore prepared to live.”** Remember, that both under life or death, lies the love and mercy of God.

## V. WHO WILL BE IN HEAVEN?

A. **God will be there.** While on the island of Patmos, the apostle John, heard a great voice out of the throng saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.” (Revelation 21:3).

1. John wrote: “No man hath seen God at any time...” (I John 4:12). But in eternity, the faithful children of God of all nations and kindred and race of every generation, will see and be with God throughout eternity!
2. The psalmist states: “As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with beholding thy form.” (Psa. 17:15).

3. We shall not only see God, but He shall dwell in our midst. The last stanza of a beautiful hymn goes like this:

“My God and I will go for aye together  
We will walk and talk as good friends should  
and do.

This earth will pass, and with it common trifles;  
But God and I will go on unendingly.”

**B. Jesus will also be there.** On earth we see Him only by faith. We long to see Him and to be with Him in person. Like some of the Greeks of the first century, *“we would see Jesus.”*

1. Before seeing the beautiful new Jerusalem, the walls of jasper and the gates of solid pearl, swinging open on hinges of gold, before walking down the street of transparent gold, I want to see Jesus! The apostle John informs us that we shall see His face (Rev. 22:4).

2. We read in I John 3:2 that, “we shall see Him as he is.” Let us sing with the hymn writer: “Face to face with Christ my Savior, Face to face what will it be, When with rapture I behold Him, Jesus Christ who died for me.”

**C.** We shall see and be with the faithful Bible characters of all time, as well as all the faithful Christians. Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel will be there with Peter, James and John and Paul, and time would fail me to mention other faithful and devoted Bible characters.

1. All the faithful children of God who have lived since Bible times will also be in heaven. I can't wait to see faithful soldiers of the cross, as well as dedicated sisters in Christ that have gone on before us. I can't wait to see our son, *Shane!*
2. Next to our heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, I long to see my precious mother, my wife and all my children. In heaven we will be with all of our loved ones who lived and died as faithful Christians forever more. What a joyful reunion that will be!

## CONCLUSION:

1. What an unspeakable, beautiful, eternal life awaits us "*over there.*" In 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10 Paul quotes these words from Isaiah: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him..."
2. Reference here is primarily to the Christian dispensation, but application can surely be made to what awaits faithful children of God in heaven. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" **in heaven!**
3. Although we may see the splendor and beauty of many beautiful places throughout the world, mountains, rivers, canyons, beaches and architecture of all kinds, our eyes have seen nothing comparable in beauty to what awaits the children of God in heaven. Paul said, "to depart, and to be with Christ is far better." (Phil. 1:23).

4. Don't you want to go to heaven? Friends, you have a choice as to where you will live throughout all of eternity. What is your destination if you were to die right now? You don't want to miss having an entrance reserved into the very presence of God, because if you do, you will know/experience the anguish of being lost!
5. Remember, the **Destination of the church is Heaven, the Eternal Home of the Soul. Heaven is a Prepared Place for a Prepared People!**

# Ladies Lessons:



# ENCOURAGERS OF THE CHURCH

*Cindy Rodgers*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. Have You ever met someone who is a natural encourager? They talk with you and leave you built up and feeling positive?
2. These natural encouragers are always listening, paying attention, and being intentional about how they treat others. They strive to speak well of others as well as using kind words to others.
3. The Greek word for an encourager is "*parakletos*," which means "one who is called alongside."
4. And that's exactly what we are to do for one another — stand beside one another to help.

## DISCUSSION:

### I. WHEN DO WE NEED ENCOURAGEMENT?

#### A. When are we discouraged?

1. When bad things happen, we can get discouraged.
2. It is in those times that I look around and am encouraged by those who step up.
3. Fred Rogers from Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood said "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

4. We need encouragement all the time!

B. In this life, it is easy to find discouragement; much harder to be an encourager especially when we feel that we have a need.

## II. LET US BECOME ENCOURAGERS (Phil. 2:1ff)

A. Our goal should be to encourage.

1. During Jesus' last night on earth, He told his disciples to "*Love one another the way I have loved you.*"
2. Why? Because when we sacrificially and unconditionally love one another the way Jesus loved us, then the whole world will know that we are his followers.
3. One of the most important ways we can love one another the way Jesus instructed us is by *encouraging* each other.

B. We can be encouragers with our speech. How?

1. Give a sincere compliment like Paul to Philemon and so many others (Philemon 21).
2. Speak the truth with love. Agree when appropriate. Admonish when necessary (Eph. 4:15).
3. Pass on helpful information (Rom. 15:14).
4. Encourage with Scripture and tell them you are praying for them (Eph. 1: 15).

5. Let them know you love them (1 Cor. 13:4-7).
6. Comfort and assure them when they need it (Rom. 12:15).
7. Be thankful (Col. 3:15).

C. We can encourage with our actions. How?

1. Offer a smile or give a gift.
2. Learn to listen quietly.
3. Hug them.
4. Forgive them.
5. Serve them.
6. Point out their accomplishments and reward them.
7. Be honest and patient.
8. Meet them where they are so that you can help them.
9. Point them in the right direction.
10. Inspire them to be and do their best.

D. Romans 15:1-6 “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through

patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

### III. EXAMPLES

#### A. Barnabas, the Encourager.

1. Name changed by the apostles (Acts 4:36).
2. Encouraged Paul in his preaching the Gospel (Acts 9:26-30).
3. Encouraged brethren in Jerusalem and Antioch in find truth and peace (Acts 11:22-24).
4. Encouraged Paul working alongside him (Acts 14:14; 15:36).
5. Even after a disagreement concerning John Mark, Paul was still encouraged by working with Barnabas and would use their work as an example (1 Cor. 9:6).
6. It may be that Barnabas’ influence and encouragement on Paul later helped John Mark be useful to Paul (2 Tim. 4:11).
7. God used Barnabas in a very influential way in the development of the early New Testament Church.

8. His nickname of encourager clearly came from building up others and living a God centered life. How many people came to the knowledge of God's way of life, not only through Barnabas' preaching, but also through his example and encouragement?

B. Paul was an encourager to many congregations.

1. Looking at his letters he wrote to different congregations and people, there is definitely a pattern of encouragement.

2. Ephesians 4:1-3 "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

3. Ephesians 1: 15 "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;"

4. He builds them up; and if there is a problem, he admonishes them in love.

5. 1 Corinthians 1: 10-11 "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the

same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.”

6. 1 Corinthians 1:4 “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.”
7. When Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica, he encouraged them with assurances of Christ’s return and information about what to expect.
8. Then he said, “Therefore encourage one another and build up one another just as you also are doing” (1 Thess. 5:11).

C. I was taught in my education classes that when speaking to a student or parent about an issue to find something positive to say before addressing the issue. They must have been taking a lesson from Paul!

#### IV. WHY SHOULD WE ENCOURAGE?

A. **Spiritual growth requires it.** In 1 Thessalonians 3:2 Paul tells the persecuted church in Thessalonica that he is sending them Timothy, who will strengthen and encourage them in their faith.

1. In a similar way, we are instructed to help encourage and strengthen the faith of others who are feeling discouraged.
2. We are to provoke each other to grow spiritually.
3. Share with someone how you study the Bible.
4. Talk to them about Biblical things. Make it part of your daily conversations.
5. How often do we talk about the latest news item and fail to talk about our Lord?
6. If we know that someone is working on reading through the Bible this year or a chapter in Proverbs each day during the month, ask them about it.
7. Do it alongside them to encourage. You may be surprised how it ends up encouraging you!

**B. We lose perspective in difficult times.**

1. 2 Corinthians 7:3-7 "I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you. Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast

down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.”

2. Here we read how even the Apostle Paul was faced with so much discouragement that he lost his perspective, he was discouraged, but God comforted him. He sent Titus, and this encouraged him, restoring his spiritual perspective of the situation. As Christians, we are also called to motivate others to righteousness and holy living, and to help restore their perspective by giving them God’s *truth*.

### **C. God commands it.**

1. God did not design us to make it here on this earth alone. We were designed to have authentic, caring relationships.
2. We should be showing others that we care, lifting the hands of the weak, the workers in the kingdom who feel alone or worn out (Heb. 12:12-13).
3. We can encourage them by serving right beside them.
4. God also promises to comfort us as we face difficult circumstances “so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the



comfort we ourselves have received from God.” (2 Cor. 1:4)

5. He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5).
6. We can and should be encouraged by this!

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. Our goal should be to encourage one another, and build up one another.
2. In a world where it is common to see other women tear one another down, make one feel unworthy, make others feel “less-than,” or even take away self-worth, it is vital that we as Christian women build one another up.
3. Encourage one another in righteousness.
4. Help those who are weak.
5. Be loving, kind, and tenderhearted.
6. May we be encouragers in our daily walk.
7. God is so good and blesses us in so many ways, but we live in the midst of this often-cruel world. God is on our side, and He loves us so very much. This does not exempt us from the pain, heartache, sickness, and hardships that come with it.
8. In these hard times, we can be the helpers, the “along-siders,” the encouragers.

# TEACHERS OF THE CHURCH

*Tish Clarke*

## INTRODUCTION:

1. "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10).
  - A. If Christ, the Master Teacher came to seek and save the lost, then should I not also have as my underlying goal the desire to seek and to save that which is lost?
  - B. Too often, we do not see the precious soul embedded in God's child. (Mark 8:36).
2. All is at stake.
  - A. Heaven is prepared for the obedient child of God. (Matt. 25:34, John 14:1-3).
  - B. Hell is prepared for the soul lost in sin. (Matt. 25:46).
  - C. Considering the gravity of the situation, a teacher must be willing to sacrifice her time and put forth a great amount of effort to win these precious souls for the kingdom.

## DISCUSSION:

### I. FOUR FUNDAMENTAL FACTS ABOUT TEACHING

A. God is supreme; therefore, the Word that He authored is final, and it alone has the last word in the classroom.

1. The Bible teacher must be very careful about the sources and materials she uses in her classroom.
  - a. If the material contradicts the Word of God, it must be discarded.
  - b. If the source is unknown to the teacher, she must carefully scrutinize its teaching for accuracy.
  - c. Even when the source is known to the teacher, she must verify the accuracy of its doctrine.
2. A Christian teacher is much like a gardener.
  - a. She cultivates the seed, the Word of God, and provides necessary nourishment, the materials of instruction, proper visual aids, and application to her students' lives.
  - b. Teachers provide a great deal of influence on their students' lives, but they remember it is God that gives the increase. (1 Cor. 3:5-7).

B. Man needs salvation is the second fundamental fact.

1. Every lesson's goal should have at its core that man needs salvation and salvation is only found in God through Christ.
2. God is the central focus of every lesson taught.
  - a. For example, a lesson about the worldwide flood of Gen. 6, does not have Noah as its central character.
  - b. Noah, his family, the sinful generation, the clean and unclean animals are all minor characters next to God.
  - c. God is the focus of the lesson and each child should leave the class with an understanding of the depth of His longsuffering and be in awe at the show of His tremendous power.
  - d. While Noah is an integral part of the story, God and His desire for man's salvation is the central focus.

C. The Bible is the first source for the Christian teacher.

1. Ultimately, the Bible has the final say – no matter how clever or cool the information is to the lesson. (2 Pet. 3:16-18).
2. This is a danger that many Bible teachers fall into when they plan out the lesson or have a lack of planning.

- a. Coloring books and picture books that contain false doctrine have no place in the Bible classroom.
- b. Never bring anything that would detract from the Word of God and its fundamental authority into the classroom.
- c. If the material is good except for one small part, black out the error so that it is not inadvertently taught.

D. Christian teaching emphasizes the relationship between God and man.

- 1. The Christian teacher realizes that the student has three basic needs.
  - a. The teacher will cause the student to realize he or she needs to develop a personal relationship with God and His Word.
  - b. As the student matures, the teacher will want to guide the student into an understanding of what is involved in order to be a Christian and grow in maturity.
  - c. Finally, the teacher should help cultivate a desire for the student to want to give of his or her life in service to God.

2. Even in cradle roll class, a child can be taught Who God is and His love for the child.

## **II. PAUL, A MASTER TEACHER, HAD A SET CLEAR PURPOSE IN HIS TEACHING.**

- A. Paul had a clear purpose in his life; he has a desire to reach Heaven. (1 Cor. 9:26).
- B. Paul had a specific desire for all those he taught. (1 Cor. 2:1-5).
- C. Paul's instructions to Timothy are valuable to all teachers today.
  1. He reminded Timothy that winning souls was a battle that must be won. (1 Tim. 1:18).
  2. He exhorted Timothy to be an example. (1 Tim. 4:12).
  3. He encouraged Timothy to become like Christ in his manner of life. (1 Tim. 6:11).
  4. He told Timothy to study and choose "sound doctrine." (2 Tim. 1:13).
  5. He exhorted Timothy to be mindful of his reputation as a teacher. (2 Tim. 2:15).
  6. He teaches Timothy who to look to for a mentor. (2 Tim. 4:5-7).

## **III. THE NEW TESTAMENT IS FULL OF PRACTICAL LESSONS FOR THE BIBLE TEACHER.**

- A. Teaching is a daily practice. (Acts 5:42).

- B. Teaching can be accomplished in a variety of settings. (Acts 5:42, Acts 16:14, 23-32).
- C. As difficult as it sometimes can be, we must seek out our relatives and good friends and strive to teach them God's Truth. (Acts 10:24).
- D. Visual aids can be a powerful tool. (Matt. 13).
- E. The fields are ripe unto harvest and we must sow the seed. (John 4:35).
- F. Many will turn their backs on the truth, however many will not. (John 6:66-68).

#### **IV. WOMEN ARE VALUABLE TEACHING TOOLS IN THE LORD'S CHURCH.**

- A. God gave women the maternal instinct to nurture, protect, and guide children.
  1. Women are infinitely more patient and long-suffering with children.
  2. Women are natural communicators; ask any man!
  3. Women are capable multi-taskers which comes in handy in the Bible classroom (corralling children while continuing to teach a lesson, changing a diaper while continuing to sing the song, answering multiple questions at once and still managing to stay focused on the lesson at hand, etc.).

B. There are multiple areas women are needed to effectively grow the church.

1. Many women work outside the home and provide multiple contacts for Bible studies.
2. Women are gifted at hospitality and can combine a cup of coffee with a Bible discussion in a heartbeat.
3. Women are very crafty in their souls and spend countless hours scouring Pinterest, craft stores, Dollar Tree, yard sales, and countless other locations to find the perfect object or craft for a lesson to drive the point home to a child.
4. Wanted: a diligent seeker of Truth for the Ladies Bible Class.
5. Women are naturally compassionate and encouraging to lost souls and seek to find ways to alleviate pain.
6. Women have beautiful blank cards that can be filled with teaching and used to mail a Bible Correspondence Course to a soul seeking answers!
7. There are a few areas that we don't often think of when it comes to teaching.
  - a. Prison Ministries are a vital source of damaged and lost souls.
  - b. Addiction Centers are overflowing with lost souls.



- c. The women in these locations are a captive audience and generally have nowhere to look but up!

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. Women are a God given resource in the church when it comes to seeking and saving lost souls.
2. It is a command to seek and save the lost, no matter your gender.
3. All Christian women must become teachers, or they are not growing in the kingdom. (Heb. 5:12).