

Our purpose is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

“To continue speaking the truth in love,” “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” “keeping the ordinance as delivered.”

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the Old Paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

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NO. 4

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LORD’S CHURCH

BY WAYNE FUSSELL

A teacher in our congregation made a statement recently that thrilled me. He said that in recent years he had come to value the church more than at any other period in his Christian life. It always pleases me for people to tell how important the church is to them - how much they love the church. Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it. If we love Him, we will love His church.

One day Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was. Peter answered correctly, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”. Jesus blessed him for that statement and declared that on that foundational truth He would build His church. Then He added, “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Hades is the realm of the dead, so Jesus was saying that death would not prevail against His church. You say, “but He died”. Yes, but He conquered death by rising from the dead. And on Pentecost, he sent the Holy Spirit to give life, organization, and a law to His church that was established on that day. Death did not prevail against the establishment of the church. And it did not prevail against the continuation of the church. All of the apostles, save one, died violent deaths, yet the church continued. Great men and women of the church have died in all the ages since that time, and yet the church continues. It is a grand divine institution preserved and kept alive by its ever-living Builder. There is no question about the importance of the Lord’s church.

In spite of all this, there are those who disparage the church. They say, “Jesus, yes; the church, no!” They profess a great love for Christ, but they deny any importance to His church. There are at least two reasons for their disdain for the church: first, their misunderstanding of the teaching of the Bible about the church; and second, the misconceptions about the church proclaimed by religious leaders.

When you read the book of Ephesians, you see the high estimation the inspired writer placed on the Lord’s church. “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23). We know that Christ is head over all things, but what is meant by the phrase “to the church”? Hendriksen says that it means that Christ exercises His authority over all things “in the interest” or “for the benefit” of the church. One translation says that He exercises authority over all things “for the good of the church”. Does this not say something about the Lord’s estimation of His church?

Paul says further that the church “is His body” (Verse 23). What value do you place on your body? Just as my body is important to me, so Christ’s spiritual body is important to Him. Then he says that the church is “the fullness of Him who fills all in all”. Christ fills all in all; but what fills Him? The church! The church is a manifestation of the fullness of Christ-the body filled by his life. And that speaks volumes about the importance of the church. As members of the church, we are the representatives of Christ in the world. What we do for Him “fills” Him.

The book of Ephesians tells us that the church is part of God’s “eternal purpose”. “...to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (3:10-11). The manifold (many sided) wisdom of God is made known through the church, and this is in keeping with God’s eternal purpose. That lets me know that the church was in the mind of God before He ever created man. It was so important that He planned it before He laid the foundation of the earth! Some smart people tell us that since the Jews rejected Jesus, He did not set up

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Editorial

WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING

By DON L. KING

Times are difficult, that is an understatement. With the costs of virtually everything rising daily, world leaders using the term “nuclear” now and then, the war in Ukraine becoming worse by the day, the death toll rising, etc., it is no surprise that we are on the alert, to say the least. It is likely that some are wondering “why” this is the case.

Paul wrote in Romans 15:4 “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” In the Bible we can read of God’s people going through difficult situations and this can be a learning experience for us.

Consider the trials Job encountered. They were terrible and while Job endured them all with grace and dignity, inside he was wondering why God allowed it to happen. In fact, his greatest failure was his adamant statements that he didn’t deserve what was happening to him. His friends attempted to convince him that he must have committed some great sin and God was punishing him, etc. He knew better and tried to change their minds. He had lost literally everything in this physical life except his own life and that was also threatened by a severe onset of boils everywhere on his body. All of his wealth was gone, his ten children were dead, the victims of a terrible storm which crushed them under their elder brother’s house and while he was puzzled in his mind, he never lost his faith in God, and his love for God remained firm. Even when his wife suggested he curse God and die, he remained firm that God was good. The Bible records: “In all this did not Job sin with his lips.” (Job 2:10). Eventually, God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind and asked him to answer questions which Job could not do. It was only then that he realized how foolish he had been to even wonder why. Job said: “Wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:6) In the end, God restored everything back to Job, doubling his losses except his children which were given back in the same number, and perhaps the same children for which he had grieved.

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**THINGS TO CONSIDER ABOUT THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST**

The Bible Only

In the 16th century, the German monk Martin Luther sparked a huge movement that shook the world of that day. His criticisms of Roman Catholic practices launched a much-needed effort toward reform. One of the principles he advocated was that the Bible alone should be our guide in religious matters. As was common in that day, he coined a Latin phrase to designate this idea - Sola Scriptura - "The Scripture Only."

The concept of Sola Scriptura is certainly a noble and Biblical one. If the Bible is the inspired word of God, then it stands to reason that it alone ought to be our guidebook from here to heaven. Many people today affirm that they subscribe to this concept. Yet despite so many claiming Sola Scriptura as their motto, it is surprising that there is so much religious division and so many people following religious practices for which there is no express Biblical example or precedent.

The first-century church was certainly a people of The Book. In the very beginning it had only the Old Testament for its Bible, along with oral teaching from the inspired apostles. But as the New Testament books were written (from about AD 50 to AD 95), the resultant writings are literally filled with Old Testament quotations. Estimates of the number of quotations range from 500 to 1000 quotations or allusions, depending on how one counts them. This point alone shows the importance of the Bible to the first-century church.

But we also learn from the New Testament that its inspired authors intended the church to follow their teachings as the word of God. First Corinthians 14:37 says that "if anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." In 2 Thessalonians 2:15 the same apostle urges Christians to "stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle." Contrary to the dogmas of Roman Catholicism, this passage does not teach that Christians are to follow the accumulated "tradition" of centuries handed down orally after the time of the apostles. Paul's "traditions" taught by "word of mouth" simply refers to the instruction that he and other inspired teachers delivered to the church during the first century! These instructions are now contained in the New Testament writings.

Paul also states that, "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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3: 16-17). This passage affirms that the person who has the Bible has the instruction manual which alone equips him or her "for every good work." If it equips for "every" good work, then no other source of good in the sight of God is needed, or even exists! It alone is the source book for all we need to please God and go to heaven.

Yet, no matter how often the denominational world repeats the slogan Sola Scriptura - "The Scripture Alone" - denominationalism is filled with beliefs and practices about which the scripture says nothing! It is a slogan which in principle is ignored. If Sola Scriptura is a valid principle - and we believe it is - then we need to be ready to accept the conclusions to which it leads. Following "the Bible only" means more than just what it says about believing in Jesus. It means more than just rejecting the Roman Catholic practices of the sale of indulgences, works of supererogation, and the "satisfaction" of sin's temporal consequences in purgatory in the afterlife.

The New Testament teaches far more than merely relying on Jesus alone for salvation. Indeed, it also teaches that we should wear no other name than Christian, even though many people today proudly identify themselves religiously by a host of identifying labels that are foreign to the Bible (Acts 11:26; Acts 4:12). It teaches that the church of the New Testament itself has a name, and that we have no authorization to call it by any other, even though a casual drive through any town in the United States will reveal countless denominational names about which the New Testament knows nothing (Romans 16:16; Ephesians 4:12). It also teaches that the apostles ordained specific "ordinances of divine service" or "worship" which the church is to do in its assemblies, even though there is no end to the creative innovations in worship that people presume to offer to God in the name of Christ (John 4:24; Acts 20:7; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, etc.). This list could go on endlessly. By and large, the denominations ignore these and other principles out of preference for traditional labels and practices while they claim "liberty in Christ" as authority for such things.

That is why churches of Christ today have committed themselves to take the Bible alone as the basis for all

its teaching and practice. This does not mean, however, that every church that has “Church of Christ” on its sign out front is true to this principle. But it does mean that many churches of Christ share this identifying characteristic of the first century churches, as they were guided by the apostles. For the churches of Christ, the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the infallible guide in all matters of service and devotion to Christ.

TWO BROTHERS OR THE SNAKE AND THE SASQUATCH

BY KYLE A. HAMMONDS

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Editor’s Note: I am always thrilled to learn of the amazing talents of brothers and sisters around the world, and to discover how those blessings are being used to further the cause of Christ. Some months ago, Brother Kyle Hammonds of the Norman, OK congregation was a guest speaker at West View (Piedmont, OK). Kyle is at the University of Oklahoma as a Doctoral Candidate, Director of Public Speaking, Department of Communication and a Research Fellow, Language and Reconciliation at the OU Center for Peace & Development. He kindly gave permission to publish his sermon about the Bible and Reconciliation in the Old Paths Advocate. The article will be presented in three parts. —Greg Gay

Part 1:

Does it ever seem to you like people just can’t talk to each other anymore? Conflict and hardships are always worse when we believe there will never be a way to get along with the other party. Although I believe that God made us with uniqueness and differences, I also believe that He blessed us with the gift of communication in order to help us seek unity. Even so, it may seem challenging to find unity in a time that is fraught with political, social, and even personal conflict. While feelings of hurt or frustration may certainly be valid, God’s people also cannot lose sight of the fact that Jesus expects those in His Kingdom to be unified in their mission as Christians - and to put their Christian identity above all else. In his final farewell in the 2nd Corinthian letter, Paul said in chapter 13 & verse 11: “... Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” According to Strong [G2675], that phrase “be complete,” in this particular context, means to restore. This verse is a plea for peace and unity amid strife - an indication that Christians cannot simply cut each other

off over disagreement. But the question remains: If we feel hurt by others, how do we restore unity with them? The Bible is filled with instructions, examples, and advice regarding unity. This essay explores the subject of unity by examining key moments in the rivalry between two famous men of the Bible. One was known for his serpent-like shrewdness and the other for his hairy appearance. There are at least 10 lessons we can learn about reconciliation from studying the lives of these two brothers.

Background.

The famous brothers who had a fierce rivalry were Jacob and Esau, and their story begins in Genesis 25. Jacob and Esau were twin brothers, with Esau being slightly older. Verses 23-25 say: And the Lord said to [Rebekah]: “Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger.” 24 So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. 25 And the first came out red He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau.

The name Esau is kind of funny, by the way, because it is basically the ancient equivalent of our modern word “Sasquatch.” It just refers to an extremely hairy being. Further, this nickname was not an exaggeration. When Jacob impersonated Esau to his blind father in Genesis 27, his mom had to strap goat hair to his arm in order to be convincing. That paints a pretty vivid picture!

In any case: By tradition, Esau would have been first in line for the family blessings, such as inheriting the best property, because he was the first born. In this way, it was odd to think that the older would serve the younger. The message about service was not about the brothers, though; rather, it was about their descendants (e.g., 2 Sam. 8:14).

We don’t know exactly why God chose the Israelites over the Edomites to fulfill His purposes on Earth, but we know this was not a selection by merit, given that neither of the men had even been born when God decided which nation would take the leading position (see Romans 9: 10-13).

Regardless of the reason, this family grew up with the knowledge of God’s promise about the older brother serving the younger, which may have heightened Esau’s desire to please his parents. We also learn in Gen. 25: 27-28 that the parents chose favorites, which also might

have intensified the competitiveness between these boys. Their father, Isaac, favored Esau while their mother, Rebekah, favored Jacob.

Conflict Episodes.

Two incidents did seemingly irreparable damage to the relationship between these brothers. The first of the events is recorded in Gen. 25:29-34. In this story, Esau had been out working in the field...maybe he was hunting, maybe he was planting or harvesting...What we know for sure was that Esau was so exhausted from his work that he said he felt like he was dying. When Esau returned home, he was very hungry and Jacob had been making food. Esau asked if he could have some of the meal Jacob had prepared. Although Jacob knew that Esau was exhausted - and perhaps even dangerously so - he wouldn't offer food to his brother unless Esau sold him the family birthright. Basically, Jacob wanted a greater inheritance of their parents' things. Esau agreed to the trade, so Jacob received the promise of the birthright and Esau received the food. This was a terrible trade! Esau got a really awful deal out of this and Jacob knew it. It seems clear that Esau should have had higher esteem for his birthright and done more to protect it; however, Jacob also obviously took advantage of his brother. This incident obviously engendered bad blood between the brothers.

The other hurtful incident - the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back - is found throughout Genesis chapter 27. Esau likely found this incident to be particularly egregious because he had already lost his birthright to Jacob. In this event, Isaac was old and blind and near death. He specifically called for Esau and asked for a sort of last meal, hoping that Esau would hunt game and prepare one of his favorite foods. He promised to give a special blessing to Esau during the meal. Rebekah overheard her husband asking Esau to prepare this final meal and she came up with a plan. After waiting for Esau to go out hunting, she said to Jacob in Gen. 27:8-10..."Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves. Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death."

Jacob followed along with the scheme and the plan worked. Isaac gave his blessing of prosperity to Jacob. Esau, whose only hope of any serious gift from his father rested in the possibility of their communication

over final meal, returned home from hunting to discover that Jacob had stolen the last of his father's blessings. In verse 41, Esau swore vengeance: "So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, 'The days of mourning my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.'" This was no vain threat! Esau was a trained hunter - a strong and athletic outdoorsman. Jacob was described in Genesis 25 as a mild man. We know from Genesis chapter 32 that Jacob wasn't just a pushover, but he still undoubtedly lacked the same determination and skill of Esau. In other words, Esau was more than capable of carrying out his threat. Out of fear for his safety, Rebekah sent Jacob far away to his Uncle Laban once she caught wind of Esau's vengeful vow. Resolution.

Jacob ran away and he stayed away for many years. In fact, he was gone for at least fourteen (14) years before his next encounter with Esau. He was married. He had cultivated an occupation. He was older and wiser. Still, what do you say to someone after you've left on such a note of betrayal? Jacob was hurt by Isaac's preference for his brother and scared for his life. Esau was sad and angry. Reconciliation would be difficult, if not impossible. After Jacob finally cut ties with his Uncle Laban, he set out on his own again; but getting away from Laban meant moving back into the territory prowled by Esau and his fellow hunters. Genesis chapters 32 and 33 record the reunion of these brothers.

To be continued ...

September 1929 Issue of The Truth PLEA FOR UNITY

By HOMER L. KING

David said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Perhaps, only those who have had the sad experience of division can really appreciate the force of David's words, and can know "how good and how pleasant it is to dwell together in unity" As I view the sad state of affairs in the Church of Christ today, and see the dear Church of Jesus being torn to pieces over the innovations that are being forced into the work and worship, it makes me sick at heart. How brethren can love those things, that cause division, (even if those things were permissible), better than they love the unity, for which our blessed Savior so earnestly prayed, is more than I can understand.

I just can't understand how brethren, who, even profess

to love the cause of the Lord, can afford to contend for the use of societies, instrumental music, classes, women teachers, human literature as a text, and a plurality of cups in the observance of the Lord's Supper, when they are aware of the fact that such contention will ultimately cause division in the Church of God. It appears to me that there must be something seriously wrong with a man's heart, who will admit that the commands of Jesus can be obeyed without the use of the above things, and then keep up a contention for them to the dividing of God's people. Brethren, can it be possible that you love those things better than you do the unity of God's people? You admit we can worship God without them, then why not give them up that we all might be one? There are brethren, whom I dearly love, who are giving their time to contending for one or more of the above-mentioned things, and it pains me to see them sowing the seed of discord among brethren by such contention. May God help us to heed the language of Paul, thus: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Rom. 14: 19. Why not, brethren? Submitted in love, Homer L. King

THE NAME, CHRISTIAN

By PAUL O. NICHOLS

The name, Christian, was first applied to the disciples of Jesus in the city of Antioch (Acts 11:26). Some seem to think that it was given as a nickname by non believers. However, there are a number of scriptures which teach to the contrary.

Names in the Bible have always had significance and meaning. Such is not so much the case in our culture. We may name a child after one of the parents or grandparents, or we may name a child after a friend or some other person we admire. However, names in the Bible often have significant meaning, and the name of a man or woman might even be changed to signify some special characteristic or position of that individual.

God was the one who originated a family name. The first man and woman were known by the name, "Adam". "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created" (Gen. 5:1, 2). They were Mr. and Mrs. Adam. Adam called his wife by a name that was

significant. The name he gave her was "Eve", which meant "mother of all" (Gen. 3:20).

Abraham's name was changed from Abram, after God revealed to him that he was going to have a son and that his posterity was to become a great nation. The name signifies "father of a multitude". His wife, Sarai, whose name meant "my princess" changed her name by God's decree. From that time on her name was Sarah, which signified she was princess of the multitude.

God promised about seven hundred years before its fulfillment that He was going to give His people a new name. The city of Jerusalem and the Israelites wore the name of God. "...Thy city and thy people are called by thy name" (Dan. 9: 10). The name, "Jerusalem" means "God send peace". The people of God in that time were called "Israelites" after Jacob's name was changed to Israel. The suffix "el" of Israel is the prefix of "Elohim", a name for God. So in that respect the city and the people were called by the name of the Lord. And at that time He said He was going to give His people a new name. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name" (Isa. 62:2). Notice, also, in Isa. 56:5 He tells us, "Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

There were certain things that had to be in place before the new and everlasting name could be given. The "house of the Lord" had to be established. The apostle Paul tells us that the "house of God" is "the church of the living God" (1 Tim, 3:14, 15). The church was brought into existence on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41, 47). Also, the gentiles had to have access to salvation that God provided through Jesus Christ. This provision was made at the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. He said, "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." (2 Tim. 1:11). It was also this apostle who appeared before king Agrippa and offered him salvation through Christ (Acts 26:28). In Acts chapter 10 the apostle Peter was sent to the house of Cornelius, a Roman soldier and a gentile, and there he converted a number of the relatives and friends (Acts 26:47). "Then hath God also granted repentance unto

the Gentiles” (Acts 11:18). Now that everything in the prophecy is in place it was time for the new name to be given to the disciples of Christ. After the gentiles had seen the righteousness of God and provision was made for the kings to see His glory, the new name, “better than of sons and daughters” was given in the “house of God” (church). The name “Christian” was the new name which the Lord gave his people. “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch” (Acts 11:26). The apostle Paul declared, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Eph. 3:14). “Christian” is the name of the whole family, And only those who have been “born again” into the family of God have a right to wear the family name (John 3:5, 7). The root of the name Christian is Christ, and the apostle Paul said, His name “Is above every name.” (Phil.2:9). Jesus said in his letter to the church at Pargamos, “I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith...(Rev. 2:13). And to the church at Philadelphia He said, thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name” (Rev. 2:13). Even the church wears His name. The inspired apostle Paul wrote to the Romans and said the churches of Christ salute you, meaning several congregations of the Lord’s church were sending their greetings to the church located in Rome.

All men need to be informed and commit to memory the fact, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

THE DIVINE BODY

BY RICK MARTIN

There are many different religious bodies found in the world today. Seeds that were buried thousands of years ago have been uncovered and replanted and made to reproduce their own kind. So, we can identify the church, the body of Christ, by its characteristics and be sure of its existence.

First, when was the church established? The kingdom or church is prophesied in the Old Testament in Isaiah 2:2-4. In Matthew 3:1-2 we find that it is still a thing of the future. In Matt.16:18, in the personal life of Christ, it is still a thing of the future. However in Acts 2:47,

we see that the church was established on the day of Pentecost.

Second what was it called? In Matt.16: 18 we see that it was Christ’s church or the Church of Christ. It is not the “Christian” church nor the “Disciple” church. It is the body of Christ, Eph. 1:22-23. He gave Himself for it, Eph.5:25. He bought it with His own blood, Act 20:28. It is also called “the church of God” in 1 Cor.1:2, and “the church of the firstborn” Heb.12:23. The church is the bride of the Redeemer, Rev. 21:2 and Rev. 22:17. Local congregations are referred to as “the Churches of Christ” Rom. 6:16.

The third question is what does this body consist of? It is made up of those who believe in Christ and turn to God. Those who confessed their faith in Christ, were buried with Him in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life. An important thing to notice is they did not “join” the church. Instead, we see they were “added”, Acts 2:47. The church consisted of obedient believers in Christ. Examples of this are the 3000, Acts 2; the Samaritans, Acts 8:12; Cornelius, Acts 10; Lydia and her household, Acts 16; and the Philippian jailer, Acts 16. All these people became members of the body because of their obedience to the Gospel.

Fourth, what are the characteristics of the body of Christ? The people who made up the body were known as Christians, Acts 26:28. Their only creed was Jesus Christ and they were guided by the inspired teachings of the apostles. They met upon the first day of the week for the Lord’s supper, teaching and, giving, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2. The giving was made a part of their duty on the Lord’s day by the “commandment of the Lord”, 1 Cor. 14:37. They continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine, in breaking of bread and in prayers, Acts 2:42.

Fifth we see that there has never been but one divine institution and it is the church of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Eph. 4:4 tells us there is “one body.” 1 Cor.12:13 says, “for by one spirit we are all baptized into one body.” Any institution that does not bear the earmarks of the New Testament church is not the Church of Christ.

Sixth, how does a person become a member of this body? Salvation cannot be found in denominations. If one wishes to be saved, he/she must be obedient to the Gospel of Christ. This consists of belief, repentance, confession, and baptism. The Gospel makes Christians

and saves men. Upon this obedience men are added to the one body which the Lord Jesus purchased with the shedding of His precious blood.

Seventh, we see the church was established in the days of the apostles. The church was established in Jerusalem. Concerning the church, no other place of divine establishment is found. Notice Isa. 2:2-3 - "In Jerusalem" the word of the Lord would go forth. This took place in Acts 2. "All nations" flowed into that kingdom. Zech. 1:16 states, "Therefore thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem." In Luke 24:47 we find these words, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." These scriptures affirm that any religious institution established in any other place or at any other time cannot be the true church. Let us lay aside the teachings and traditions of men and accept only the things recorded in God's word.

Eighth, I want to mention that the church is not a tree with various denominations being the branches. In John 15 the Lord referred to individuals as branches, not churches. These individuals were all in the same vine. To fit the divided picture, we see today in religion, we would have to have many vines. We are mindful of the fact that there is "one" vine. That vine is Jesus himself, John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman."

In conclusion we are content to belong to nothing except the Church of Christ. We are not a member of any denomination. Is this exclusive as some have said? Not in the least. Everyone has the same right and we plead with all men to accept it.

The Church of Christ does not occupy any denominational ground. We seek to build up the undenominational body of Christ, for which He died. We seek to restore the worship of the early church and ask all men to lay aside their creed books, to go back to Jerusalem and back to the Bible. —Rick Martin, teachermartin@gmail.com

THE IMPORTANCE....continued from page one

His intended kingdom, but set up the church as a stop-

gap measure, as kind of an afterthought. Not so! God planned the church from eternity and the church is the kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19).

And there is glory in the church. "...to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21). God said in Isaiah 43:7 that He created man "for My glory". Why are we here? To glorify God. Where can man glorify God today? Paul says, "In His church". If a person wants to glorify God, he/she must be in the Lord's church.

Paul continues to write about the importance of the church in Ephesians: "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body" (5:23). He emphasizes again the authority of Jesus over the church, but then says that He is the Savior, not of all men, but of His body, the church! The implication is clear; to be saved, we must be in His body, the church! Many today deny that the church is essential to man's salvation. Don't you believe it. Jesus is the Savior of the church.

Does Jesus value the church? Listen to Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her". How much did He love the church? "He gave Himself" for the church. In His death on the cross He had His church in view; He was dying for the church! Paul told the Ephesian elders, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). We value things by the price we have to pay for them. The highest price ever paid was paid for the church - the precious blood of Jesus.

It is Jesus' design that the church be "glorious". "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27). That word "glorious" means to be "held in high esteem". The church is glorious in every respect: in its beginning, its purpose, and its effect on humanity. We should constantly extol the praises of the Lord's church wherever we go.

I was visiting with a lady one day that I wanted to win

to the Lord and His church. There was another lady visiting her, who from the time I got there till the time I left extolled the praises of the church she attended. As I listened to her, I thought that she was doing exactly what every member of the Lord's church should be doing. We should take every opportunity to tell about the wonderful congregation we attend, where love is manifested, where we "speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent", where we do Bible things in Bible ways, and where God is glorified. Do we really hold the church in "high esteem"?

To further show the importance Jesus attaches to the church, Paul says that He "nourishes and cherishes the church", just as one cares for his own body. He says that Jesus does this because "we are members of His body" (Ephesians 5:29-30). Even as you care for your own body, Jesus has the same concern for His body, the church!

So, I say, whatever the Lord's church is, I want to be a part of it, don't you? If you love Jesus, and the church is His church, His body, how can you not love the church? How can you not desire to learn more about the church, its nature, its purpose, its design?

Sometimes people fail to realize the value of what they have. A story is told of a man who loved old books. He met a friend who had just thrown away a Bible that had been stored in the attic of his ancestral home for generations. "I couldn't read it," the friend explained. "Somebody named Guten-something had printed it." "Not Gutenberg!" the book lover exclaimed in horror. "That Bible was one of the first books ever printed. Why, a copy just sold for over two million dollars!" His friend was unimpressed. "Mine wouldn't have brought a dollar. Some fellow named Martin Luther had scribbled all over it in German." The man had a treasure and didn't know it. We have a treasure in the church-do we know it? Do we appreciate it? Do we hold it in "high esteem"? It is the most valuable institution in the world. If you are a Christian, a member of the Lord's church, thank your God every day for the privilege and honor.
— wfussell1@comcast.net

WRITTEN FOR OUR....continued from page two

This terrible incident in the life of Job can be enlightening to us. Why do Christians sometimes suffer? Why must

a child of God stand brokenhearted beside the grave of a young child, wife or husband taken by death when they are so sorely needed and missed, and know that life will never again be the same? The factual answer lies beyond our finite minds. We just can't know what God has in mind when He allows us to suffer. His ways are beyond our ability to understand and know. In Isaiah 55:8,9 God said: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The attitude manifested by Job is wonderful. He said speaking of God: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: but I will maintain mine own ways before Him." It is unquestionably difficult for us, but we must trust God to know what is best, and that He sees our circumstances from a completely different perspective than human views.

Paul made a tremendously comforting point in 2 Corinthians 4:16,17: "For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We grow older each day and our bodies gradually weaken until finally, death is ours to experience. However, get this great point! The inward, or spiritual man, is becoming stronger because it is being renewed day by day. Spiritually, we become stronger as the physical body becomes weaker. Scripture tells us flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom of God, (1 Corinthians 15:50) so we must shed this old body in preparation to receive our glorious body which will be eternal. That allows us to understand more fully that this life is of necessity, temporary. What do we know about death then? Well, we know that death is a means of transportation to get us from this life to the next one. Too, we understand that sufferings we must endure in this life actually make us better than we ever would have been without them. We are prepared for a better life by the troubles in this life. We complain about our troubles, but we are actually improved by them.

The world is in chaos now but remember God is always in charge. Thank the Lord we have the church paid for by the blood of our Savior. This is our way of getting to Heaven. I fear we may not always appreciate, as we should, what God has done for us by giving us the church. I recall what Lynwood once said: "No matter what happens to us here, it will be alright anyway!" Think on these things. —DLK

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Bonds of Matrimony

LANKFORD - YOUNG

James Lankford of Neosho, Missouri, and Jerri Young of Springfield, Missouri, were united in holy matrimony in Aurora, Missouri, on January 15, 2022. I have known James and Jerri for many years and I am thrilled they have found each other at this point in their lives. I was honored to officiate the wedding ceremony before an intimate crowd of immediate family members at the Aurora church building. A winter storm hit the area the night before the wedding and left the Ozarks covered in deep snow. James observed that the snow just added to the beauty of the setting. May God richly bless this couple with many years of marital bliss. Their plan is to reside in Springfield. —Carl M. Johnson

Our Departed

KARR - Melba Ann Laney Karr of Carrollton passed away Saturday, December 11, 2021, at her residence surrounded by family. Melba lived with her son Keith and daughter-in-law; Lisa and Keith who are to be commended for their care of her. She was born in Phenix City, Alabama, June 16, 1940, daughter of the late Hedric and Christine Harlin Laney. Melba worked

18 years with Temple School System as a bus driver. She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, Roy Karr and son, Brad Karr. She was a member of the Temple Church of Christ, where she was a mainstay for many years. She will certainly be missed by her brothers and sister in Christ. The church was important to Melba. She and her late husband Roy often attended Gospel meetings throughout the country. She encouraged her children and grandchildren to study the Bible and faithfully serve the Lord. Survivors include her sons and daughter-in-law, Keith and Lisa Karr and Steve Karr; sister, Joyce Hammond; grandchildren, Josh (Marie) Karr, Donny (Madison) Karr and Chris (Miranda) Karr; and great grandchildren, Makenna Karr, Elijah Karr, Tucker Karr, Kooper Karr, Laney Karr, Blake Rose Karr and Josiah Karr. It was my honor, at her request, to speak words of comfort to family and friends who gathered to mourn her passing. Bother Aaron Studdard assisted me, and Bother Terry Langley led the prayer at the Centerpoint cemetery where she was laid to rest next to her husband.

—Rick Martin

DUKE - Mrs. Nora Narvel Langley Duke, age 94, of Hogansville, passed away on September 19, 2021. Narvel was born on May 29, 1927, in Randolph County, Alabama to the late Noah Langley and Una Prince Langley. She retired from Hanes Hosiery and at one time was the Co-Owner of Duke's Septic and Construction Company. She was a member of the Four Oaks Church of Christ in LaGrange, GA. The church was very important to her. Even amidst the pandemic, when many her age would have stayed away, she continued to attend church services. She was one of the humblest people I have ever known. She persevered through many tragedies in her life. She was always kind and had an encouraging word for everyone. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Heddie Woodville Duke, a daughter, Beverly Connell Boyd, a son, Neal Duke, sisters, Jacqueline Yates, Martha Martin (Bobby) and Ora Nell Burson (Henry Lee), a granddaughter, Heather Brazil and a great granddaughter, Cayla Gribble. Survivors include her grandchildren, Robert Brazil (Cathy), David Duke (Kelli), Andy Jones (Beth) and Cory Jones (Whitney); brother, Noah P. Langley; brother-in-law Mac Yates; eleven great grandchildren; special niece, Farrell Lee Pharr; numerous nieces, nephews and extended family. It was my honor as her nephew to speak at her funeral. Bother Larry Thompson assisted me, and the singing was beautifully done by some of her Prince cousins. She was laid to rest in the Big Springs cemetery in Roanoke, AL to await the resurrection day. —Rick Martin

Field Reports

Wayne Fussell, 6126 Land O' Trees, Shreveport, LA, March 11, 2022. The church in Shreveport is doing well. We are happy to have Marcus Mathis working with us. Marcus came to us from Wichita Falls, where he was ordained as an Evangelist. He has a great love for the lost, and we are expecting many souls to be saved through his efforts. Bobby Cunningham accompanied me to Temple, GA this month for a wonderful meeting with some great Christian folks. Bobby preached one night of the meeting to the delight of his audience. We were blessed with cooperation from neighboring churches, and preachers, including Rick Martin, Terry Studdard, Russ Gilley, Sonny Fling, and Kevin Presley. My next meeting is at Bendavis, MO May 27-29. May God bless His church throughout the world.

David Griffin, March 2022. The Lord continues to bless us here at the Lee's Summit congregation, near Lebanon, MO. The church is at peace endeavoring to follow in "all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1 :6). It has been my privilege over the past number of weeks to conduct studies with both non-members as well as members of the church. Thanks to the Lord, we have recently had visitors at our services with whom I have been able to visit on more than one occasion and address their questions about various issues. For quite some time now, I have been conducting weekly online sessions on the fundamentals of the Greek language with a few young brothers in various locales across the country. At the time of this writing, I also look forward to participating in the Mid-Missouri preachers' study March 14-18. I am thankful to the Lord for all these opportunities to work in His service and pray that more opportunities will emerge. God bless all in His service!

Conrado Libertino, Philippines. At present I have a little problem of my health. My blood pressure sometimes it is high even my blood sugar and uric acid but I have a medicine for my maintenance. Pertaining to the Lord's work here in Mindanao it is fine and are now at alert level 2 covid 19 until March 15. We are now permitted to travel to other provinces of the Philippines especially we who are fully vaccinated, we will just present our vaccination card and Valid ID. Brother Roger Rivera is inviting me to attend our Semi Annual preachers meeting in Abulog Cagayan on April 25-27, 2022. I plan to attend but my problem is my traveling expenses, my wife also want to go with me. Can you

please help me Bro. King? We plan also to help our brethren in Villa Corazon Church of Christ. Bro Warlito Agustin their preacher there passed away last February 13, 2022. Sister Agustin called me through phone and informed me that no one is going to that congregation. I know that Isabela needs someone to help the Lord's work there. I'm very willing to volunteer to help them. What is your honest suggestion and decision about this matter brother? God willing I plan to travel maybe the second week of April. I really missed our preachers and brethren in Luzon. God willing we have preachers meeting to be held in San Francisco Church of Christ, Liloy, Zamboanga del Norte on March 15-16, 2022 to be attended by preachers of the provinces of Misamis Occidental, Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga Sibugay. God bless and keep safe always brother.

Carl M. Johnson, 1400 Northcrest Dr., Ada, OK 74820, carlmj33@gmail.com, March 10th. We just completed our 45th annual March weekend meeting. Brother Cullen Smith conducted the meeting for us and did an excellent Job. Three young preachers spoke along with Cullen. Luke Goad of Ozark, Missouri, preached on Friday night, Kaleb Leonard of Huntington, West Virginia, preached on Saturday night, and Eric Bullock of Mt. Vernon, Kentucky, spoke on Sunday afternoon. All three of them did an outstanding job. They were very well-studied, well-organized, and they did an excellent job in their presentations. We have lost a lot of the older generation of preachers in the past couple of years and we sometimes worry about who is going to fill their shoes. However, when I see young preachers like these three come along I don't worry nearly as much. We enjoyed a record crowd of 400 on Saturday evening. We were able to accommodate the crowd in our building by opening the partition between the auditorium and foyer and setting up 100-150 extra chairs. The singing was beautiful and the preaching was based on the theme of "Homes Built by God." Three baptisms resulted from the meeting. I gave the Wednesday night chapter study last night as we began our study of the book of Romans. I am scheduled to preach here both services Sunday and again next Wednesday night. Lord Willing, I shall conduct the annual Spring Meeting at the Crescent Ridge congregation in Birmingham, Alabama, (April 10-17). From there our schedule includes: Greenville, PA (June 22-26); Goshen, OH (July 17-24); Piedmont, AL (July 26-31); Tulsa, OK (Annual Homecoming Meeting, Aug. 7-14); Livermore, CA (California Labor Day Meeting, Aug. 31-Sept 4); Mountain Home, AR (Sept. 14-18); and Joplin, MO (Leawood Vliiage, Oct. 19-23). Please pray for us. —Carl M. Johnson

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

MY NAME IS LEGION, FOR WE ARE MANY

By JERRY DICKINSON

“And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.’ For He said to him, ‘Come out of the man, unclean spirit!’ Then He asked him, ‘What is your name?’ And he answered, saying, ‘My name is Legion; for we are many.’ (Mark 5:2-9)

It seems the evil spirits could not keep quiet when they came face to face with Jesus. In Mark, chapter one, Jesus was in a synagogue and a man with an evil spirit cried out, “Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” (Mark 1:24) Jesus commanded the evil spirit to be quiet and come out of the man, and when that happened everyone in the synagogue questioned who Jesus was and why He, and He alone, had the power to cast out evil spirits. No one else had such power and authority. If they had listened, the evil spirit had told them who He was —the Holy One of God!

It always impresses me that the evil spirits not only knew who Jesus was, but they were terrified of Him. My friend, you may not believe in Hell, but the evil spirits did! They knew that their ultimate destiny was to be tormented in Hell and they recognized Jesus as the Holy One of God who would be their judge on that Great Day. “Fear not man, who can kill the body, but cannot destroy the soul; but fear God who can destroy both body and soul in Hell.” (Matthew 10:28) You may not believe in Hell but the evil spirits did and when they came in contact with Jesus they cried out, “Leave us alone!” I repeat, they were terrified of Him, and with good reason.

What a pathetic case was this man who called himself Legion. The description given by Mark is remarkable. He lived in a graveyard. He screamed night and day as he wandered in the mountains and among the tombs. He cut himself with rocks. He wore no clothes. Apparently he had extraordinary strength and whenever he had been shackled or chained he tore off the chains and broke the shackles in pieces. Mark says no one could tame him. He could not go home. His family and friends are a distant memory. Have you ever heard of a more pitiful case than this?

Then Jesus came! He crossed over the lake and landed on shore with his disciples, and immediately the poor wretch sees Jesus and runs to Jesus. Did you notice what the man does next? He worships Jesus. Amazing! Of course, he also cries out and begs Jesus not to torment him. He worships Him but he is terrified. For some reason Jesus asks his name, and the man’s reply is revealing. My name is Legion; for we are many. Please note that he uses a singular and a plural pronoun to refer to his condition. My name - we are. Talk about a personality disorder! This man’s spirit is there, but there are many evil spirits in him as well. What an almost incomprehensible mystery. But Jesus is the Master, even of the spirit world, and he commands the evils spirits to leave this man and we are told that his mind is restored and when the townsfolk see him next he is clothed and in his right mind. He asks Jesus if he can go with him but the Lord tells him to rather go home and tell your friends and loved ones what great things God has done for you. Oh, what a lovely picture of the saving grace of our Savior when this man goes home to be reunited with his family and friends. It is always that way when Jesus comes.

From home and friends the evil spirits drove him,
Among the tombs he dwelt in misery;
He cut himself as demon pow’rs possessed him,
Then Jesus came and set the captive free.
When Jesus comes the tempter’s power is broken;
When Jesus comes the tears are wiped away.
He takes the gloom and fills the life with glory,
For all is changed when Jesus comes to stay.
So men today have found the Savior able,
They could not conquer passion, lust and sin;
Their broken hearts had left them sad and lonely,
Then Jesus came and dwelt, Himself, within.