

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).

VOL. XCIII

LEBANON, MISSOURI • NOVEMBER 2021

NO. 11

THINGS TO CONSIDER ABOUT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST - continued The Name of the Church - Romans 16:16

By DAVID GRIFFIN

“The churches of Christ greet you” (Romans 16: 16, NKJV). Christianity, as practiced in 21st century America, has become a religion of gimmickry, marketing, and slogans. This reliance on marketing techniques and slick packaging results in pushing the Biblical message and purpose of the church to the background if not all together out of view. This fact is easily demonstrated by considering the variety of names by which many modern-day churches call themselves. This variety demonstrates the sad fact that Christ’s name is completely obscured. But this is nothing new. The old denominational names-Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, etc.--obscured the name of Christ by labels centering on theological disputes; today’s naming trends, on the other hand, obscure the name of Christ by a host of labels that smack of marketing and packaging.

In “Contemporary Trends in Church Names,” a blog article at churchanswers.org, author Thom S.Rainer highlights the fact that churches no longer identify themselves by the old denominational names but have adopted trendy labels “in their attempts to be different,” as Rainer puts it.

Interestingly, Rainer sees a pattern in these. For example, the word “Point” frequently appears in modern church names-LifePoint Church, CrossPoint Church, or add an “e” to be en vogue, LifePointe, or GracePointe. “Life” is another common one--Life Church, Real Life Church, New Life Church, and again LifePoint Church. “City Church” is another, sometimes accompanied by the name of the city or suburb, sometimes not-City Church of Springfield, Center City Church, Cedar City Church,

or even Dream City Church and My City Church. And the word “Cross”-Cross Church, Cross Fellowship, CrossRoads, or Cross Point. Moreover, many churches like to use what Rainer calls “meaningful names,” like Impact Church, Potential Church, Epic Church, Transformation Church, Renovate Church, or Innovate Christian Community Church. And last, some like to incorporate Greek or Latin words like, Eklessia, Ecclesia, Koinonia, and Agape <https://churchanswers.com/blog/contemporary-trends-churchnames/>).

I do not write here to critique Rainer’s article. It is actually a good and interesting piece on current practice. He is simply answering the question, “What are churches calling themselves these days?” And the answer Rainer provides is both interesting and revealing.

My article, however, addresses a different question, “What should the church be called?” This is a question that almost no one seems to ask. Or if they do, they seem to be limited only by some broad principle of what is “catchy,” “trendy,” “relevant,” or “different.” By the way, although “being different” does indeed seem to be important in modern church names, Rainer’s article clearly belies the tendency of so many churches simply to “follow-the-pack” in rehashing the same words, themes, and phrases over and again. A “herd tendency” is in fact the essence of Rainer’s article. So much for being “different”! But at any rate churches certainly appear to be avoiding the old denominational names like the plague.

What Does the New Testament Say?

When we pose the question, what should the church be called, we are asking “What does the New Testament say about what the church is called?” A survey of the New Testament reveals that when the Lord or the biblical authors refer to the church in its universal sense,

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Single Subscription One Year..... \$15.00
Also On The Internet
Published Monthly by **Old Paths Advocate**, Lebanon, MO
A.C. Brockman, 2033 King James, Lebanon, MO 65536
periodical postage paid at Lebanon, MO 65536
Send Form 3579 to **Old Paths Advocate**
1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550.

All articles published in **Old Paths Advocate** contain the view of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors and publishers. If you have any questions, please direct them to the author listed at the heading of the article.

Editorial

ANOTHER LOOK AT A FAMILIAR PARABLE

By DON L. KING

It is interesting how one may read the Bible over and over and yet fail to see important points. This, we suppose, illustrates the divine mind of God in giving the material to us by inspiration. For many years, we have enjoyed teaching the parables of Jesus. We have often taught them in overseas preaching because it allows an audience to see the value and true meaning of the church of Christ. The “laying along-side” examples in the Master’s parables furnish a wonderful manner of illustrating the great truths taught by Jesus.

Our Lord sought to teach about the church, His Kingdom, but realized His audiences knew only about the Kingdoms of men such as David and Solomon which were rich in every way. However, King Jesus was not such a King as any man before Him had been. Where they had been fantastically wealthy, He was not so in earthly things. As Lynwood Smith often said, “He came into the world through a barn door, rather than a palace.” So, he used parables to illustrate the truth about the Kingdom of Heaven. He often used such statements as: “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins,” etc., (Matthew 25:1). In Matthew 25:14 He began the parable of the talents in a similar fashion. “For the Kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.” He followed this introduction by introducing three men, one of whom received five talents, another two, and finally a third who received only one.

It is estimated by some scholars that a talent might have represented as much as twenty years labor for a single person which immediately illustrates great value. Those men who received the talents certainly recognized they had been given something of tremendous worth. It is sad that men today often fail to see the value of the Lord’s church. As we view the church now, we are struck with the realization of just how small is the value of the church to some. Their lazy attendance of services, the failure to study the Scriptures, worldly

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SOCIAL DRINKING

By IRVIN BARNES

Drunkenness is condemned both socially and religiously. Most religious people regard drunkenness as unacceptable behavior for a Christian. Drunkenness is condemned as a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:21). Ephesians 5:18 states plainly, "be not drunk with wine."

Millions of dollars and thousands of man hours are spent each year by law enforcement in an attempt to arrest, punish and/or rehabilitate those who drink. Public drunkenness is considered a crime and is therefore unacceptable social behavior.

The question then, is not if it is right or wrong to drink to the point of inebriation, but if it is scriptural to consume alcoholic drink in moderate amounts. This concept is sometimes referred to as moderation drinking, controlled drinking, or social drinking.

Social Drinking Is Anti-Social

Social drinking seriously endangers society. Statistics show that over 1 million teenagers have a drinking problem. In the USA alone there are 500,000 teenage alcoholics. Children as young as 12 years of age drink alcoholic beverages. Of the 60,000 deaths each year on the highways, 55% are alcohol-related. Other awful consequences of alcohol consumption include poverty through loss of jobs, broken homes, and various types of physical illnesses.

Controlled Drinking

There is an impossible contradiction in the concept of controlled drinking. Alcohol contains a mind-altering drug which in effect destroys control. Is it reasonable to supply people with a product which is known to attack the powers of reason and judgment and then complain because people do not exercise self-control, reason and judgment in the use of the substance?

If alcohol consumption is sinful, then drinking in moderation is equal to trying to commit adultery in moderation or to steal lie or cheat in moderation.

Does the Bible condone drinking in moderation? Does the Bible anywhere indicate that social drinking is acceptable behavior for a Christian?

Those who practice controlled intake of alcoholic beverage sometimes offer Scripture in an attempt to justify the practice.

The purpose of this lesson is to examine the texts that are offered by the proponents of social drinking to see what is really being taught in each place. We wish to see if, in fact, the Scriptures, in any way, uphold social drinking.

Wine in the Bible

Modern alcoholic products are not named in the Scriptures. Words such as whiskey, beer, wine coolers, vodka and champagne do not occur in the Bible. Wine is used repeatedly in both the old and new Testaments. The Bible also mentions strong drink (Proverbs 20:1).

Wine is used in three ways in the Bible. (1) it is used to refer to fermented wine which contains alcohol and is capable of inducing drunkenness. (2) the word wine is used to refer to unfermented grape juice or fruit of the vine. In this sense the wine will not intoxicate those who drink it. (3) the term is sometimes used in a way which is impossible to determine if the writer is discussing intoxicating fermented wine or pure grape juice.

In 1874 a book was written by a man named William Patton, titled, *Bible Wines*. The book contains some valuable historical information about how grape juice was preserved during the Old Testament era and the early part of the New Testament age of the world. I know nothing of Mr. Patton's religion. Some unscriptural usages of the words Rev., pastor, etc., are used in the book which I do not condone. However, this small 139 page book, is very valuable in a study of wine from a Bible perspective.

Did Jesus Drink Alcoholic Wine?

"For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, he hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, behold a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners" (Matthew 11:18-19).

Some who claim the Bible supports social drinking use this passage as a proof text saying that Jesus himself was a wine drinker.

The passage does not say Jesus was a wine drinker.

It says his critics accused him of being a wine bibber. Please note the two words, “they say” which attributes the statement to Jesus’ critics.

There is a difference in a wine drinker and a winebibber. The word wine bibber involved more than one who had an occasional social drink. It rather denotes a person given to a riotous, improper lifestyle associated with over much consumption of alcoholic drink.

Jesus was not devil possessed, was not a glutton and neither was he a wine bibber!

Jesus Turned Water into Wine

According to John 2:1-11, there was a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. Jesus and some of his immediate relatives were present. When the supply of wine was depleted, Mary the mother of Jesus prevailed upon him to correct the situation. Six water pots were brought which were large enough to hold two or three Firkins each, or approximately 57 gallons of water. The pots were filled with water. Jesus then turned the water into wine.

This was a social event. Wine was being consumed. Can we then assume this is Bible proof for sharing an alcoholic beverage with others at wedding receptions, parties, etc.?

Since wine sometimes refers to fermented wine which will intoxicate and sometimes refers only to pure grape juice (unfermented) it must be determined which kind of wine Jesus turned the water into. Was it alcoholic or non-alcoholic?

A careful study of the text will provide several good reasons for believing that the wine was no more than pure non-alcoholic grape juice.

First, the text indicates that a rather large amount of wine had already been consumed. If this was not so, then why was the original supply depleted? They ran out of wine because they had, “well drunk.” It is not likely that after the guests had well drunk that Jesus would produce 57 more gallons of intoxicating beverage to accommodate further inebriation.

Second, the comment by the governor of the feast about the quality of the wine indicates the substance

produced was grape juice. The freshest grape juice was used first, then grape juice was brought out of storage when the better juice was gone. Like any other fruit or juice that is stored, even though history reveals that grape juice could be stored even in Jesus’ time without it fermenting, the longer it was in storage the poorer the quality and taste.

Jesus had produced a product equal to the freshest and best juice of the grape.

Third, it is absurd to believe that Jesus was guilty of setting up a situation which had the potential of becoming hazardous to the health and well-being of the wedding guests. If the wine Jesus made was capable of making a person drunk then Jesus set up a situation which could allow the guests to over indulge and injure themselves in returning to their own homes.

Fourth, we know that Jesus was aware of Solomon’s warning about inebriating wine in Proverbs 23:29-35.

“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast”

Solomon here gives a vivid description of a drunk person who has lost all sense of danger and logic. Who can believe that Jesus would create a substance which was capable of causing a man to lie down in the sea, utter perverse things, and look upon strange women? Who can believe that Jesus created intoxicating wine for the wedding guests to drink when Solomon, hundreds of years before, warned that one should not even “look upon” intoxicating wine!

No Substance Forbidden

1 Timothy 4:3-5, is sometimes offered in defense of the consumption of alcoholic beverage.

“Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

The context of this passage has nothing to do with drinking alcoholic beverage, but is written in condemnation of a false religion that commands abstinence from marriage, and eating of meats.

Using this passage to defend drinking alcoholic beverages reduces the Scriptures to the absurdity of offering thanks for beer, wines and whiskeys for nothing is to be refused, if it is received with thanksgiving.

An individual is not going to knowingly eat food containing arsenic or some other poison just because he offers thanks for it. Who would sprinkle rat poison on his food and then eat it after thanks is offered and claim, “everything is good, when it is received with thanksgiving.”

There is certainly a logical limit to what is contained in the statement, “every creature is good.”

Timothy Told to Drink Wine

Paul instructed Timothy, “drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.” (1 Tim. 5:23).

Did Paul tell Timothy to drink grape juice instead of water or was he giving Timothy apostolic permission to take a little wine for its soothing and settling affect?

Medicinal use of alcoholic wine was a common practice in the time this was written. When the good Samaritan aided the traveler who had been beaten by those who robbed him, the Bible says the Samaritan treated the man’s injuries by “pouring in oil and wine” (Luke 10:34).

I don’t see Paul as a physician attempting to doctor a sick preacher by writing Timothy about drinking grape juice. It is obvious that until Paul wrote him, Timothy had practiced total abstinence from alcoholic drink. Timothy would not drink alcoholic wine, even medicinally, without the apostle’s recommendation.

Medicine was limited in Paul’s day. With the vast medical knowledge and variety of treatments available

today there is no good reason to risk the use of alcoholic drink even for the treatment of disease. Only under close supervision of a qualified physician should one ever consume any kind of drug or drink. There is a saying that he who tries to doctor himself, has a fool both for a doctor and a patient. This could be especially true in prescribing alcoholic beverage for one’s self.

Those who quote this passage to justify social drinking, use the passage completely out of context. The passage has absolutely nothing to do with social drinking.

The argument is often made that alcohol in limited amounts is totally harmless with no effect to the one who consumes it in small amounts. Paul must have thought a “little” wine would affect Timothy to some extent, else he would not have advised him to use it. This is proof positive that even a little, brings about some chemical change in the body.

Deacon Not Given Too Much Wine

1 Timothy 3:8, “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;”

This, some say, implies that a deacon may drink a little, but not much, therefore the passage implies permission for a drink now and then. In other words, the deacon must not be given to an over much consumption of an alcoholic beverage.

If the passage grants the use of alcohol in small amounts then deacons and deacons only would be allowed this liberty since this was given regarding deacons and no one else.

“Much” modifies the word given and not the word wine. The deacon must not be much given to wine. He must not be a person who has a strong desire for wine. Much has to do with the degree of desire for wine and not for the amount consumed.

Deacons, no doubt, ministered to the sick and injured of the church. Since wine was often administered medicinally, like as not, deacons carried it with them or at least had it on hand for that very purpose. A converted alcoholic would not be a good candidate for a deacon lest he be over much tempted to consume that which should be ministered to the sick and injured.

The passage does not condone social drinking but prohibits installing a man as a deacon who has a tendency towards wine drinking.

Drinking in Excess

Ephesians 5:18 reads, “and be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess: but be filled with the spirit.”

Much to the surprise of some, this passage does not say one may drink as long as he does not drink excessively.

Excess is not an adverb which describes how much one may drink. Excess is a noun which describes a state or condition which comes as a result of being drunk with wine. Excess means lasciviousness, outrageous conduct, wanton violence, wastefulness. Excess is from the same Greek word translated “riotous living” in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:13). The prodigal son wasted his substance on excess - on riotous living.

Simply stated, the passage means: be not drunk with wine wherein is riotous living. Homes, jobs, health, lives and one’s eternal security is wasted as a result of drinking.

Conclusion

The only sure way of never becoming drunk is to never consume anything that will produce drunkenness. Total abstinence is the only sure and safe way to stay sober.

1 Thessalonians 5:7-8 says,
“For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”

Ephesians 5:18 says, “Be not drunk with wine.”

One is drunk when he is under the influence of intoxicants. One is sober when he is free from the influence of intoxicants. When a person is sober, he is not drunk. When an individual is drunk, he is not sober.

Therefore, total abstinence is the only sure way to be sober. Never drink! Not even a little. Never allow alcoholic drink to pass over your lips and you will never be drunk!

INVITATION TO WORSHIP / BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

By GREG GAY

Through the years I have seen many “Introductions” to the Church in tract racks and on social media sites. This article is a recent revision I posted on our West View, Piedmont, OK Facebook page and use in studies with existing and prospective members. I once heard if you copy from one source without giving credit it is plagiarism, but if you copy from many sources, it is research. My revision of the introduction has been “researched” from many sources including Fair Oaks, CA, Garrett’s Creek, WV, and many other congregations in between. Perhaps others will find the information helpful for their own congregation’s members and in studies.

Invitation to worship: We understand it is a big decision to begin attending worship or to visit a new church. We want everyone to be comfortable walking through our doors so here is a brief preview of what to expect when attending our worship services at the West View Church of Christ, 175 Gooder Simpson Blvd, in Piedmont, Oklahoma.

We conduct our worship in a simple and orderly way with respectful obedience to the details of the Bible’s New Testament. We understand the Bible is to be our only guide and want our worship services to be in “spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24, John 17:17). All who attend, adults and children stay together in the worship area, each learning and worshipping as we are able. What follows is a list of the items of worship we find in the scriptures, with a short explanation of each.

Singing: Since the New Testament commands Christians to “sing and make melody in our heart” (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), we sing without the addition of any instruments of music. We express our devotion and thanksgiving to God as we make a “joyful noise” to the Lord (Psalms 95:2). Songs are selected from the songbooks that are at every seat. We hope everyone will be comfortable singing along.

Teaching: The teaching service will be conducted by men only, speaking one at a time, and is intended to strengthen, encourage, and comfort all in our walk with God (1 Corinthians 14:3, 31, 34). Open Bibles and

Bible apps are encouraged so we can see and follow as scriptures are read, explained, and given application by the speaker.

Contribution: The collection or contribution is taken only at the Lord's Day morning service (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). At this time each disciple voluntarily gives money, "as we have prospered, or earned, and as we have purposed, or planned" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Guests are not expected to participate when the basket is passed but may do so if they desire.

The Lord's Supper: Each Lord's Day morning we observe the communion just as it was introduced on the night of our Lord's betrayal (1 Corinthians 11 :23-29). The brother initiating the Lord's Supper will make a few introductory remarks before giving thanks for the bread, a single loaf of unleavened bread that represents the body of Christ (Matthew 26:26). He will break off a small piece and eat it, in obedience of the example to "break bread on the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7). The plate holding the single loaf of unleavened bread will then be passed row by row so each member of the church who wants to participate can break off their small piece to eat. Anyone who declines to participate simply passes the loaf on to the next person.

Next, the brother initiating the Lord's Supper will pick up the cup that represents the New Testament (Luke 22:20) containing grape juice that represents the blood of Jesus (Matthew 26:28-29). He will give thanks and drink a sip. Like the loaf, the single cup will be passed row by row for each person to drink or decline until the whole assembly has been served. This is the simple pattern given in the New Testament and repeated every first day of the week (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 10:16, 1 Corinthians 11:23-29).

Prayers: The prayers, led by male members of the congregation, are addressed to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:17). Our prayers praise God for his greatness, offer thanksgiving for our blessings, address various needs of which we are aware, and request God's continued watchful care over all.

To Become a Christian: At each service, at the end of the sermon, an invitation will be offered, and a song will be sung. Those wishing to become Christians are invited to step forward and let their desires be made known. One who believes in God (Hebrews 11:6, Romans 10:17),

repents of their sins (Luke 13:3), confesses that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Romans 10:9-10, Acts 8:37), and is immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the remission of sins, has the promise of the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 28: 18-19, Acts 2:38). Salvation is at the time of baptism since that is when sins are forgiven (Acts 22:16).

When we obey the gospel in this way, we become Christians (Acts 11 :26) and are added to the membership of the Lord's church (Acts 2:47) which is identified in the Bible as the Church of Christ (Romans 16:16).

The invitation is also a time when any member who has sinned publicly can come forward to request prayer for forgiveness (Acts 8:24, 1 John 2:1-2).

Please join us for worship at West View Church of Christ, 175 Gooder Simpson Blvd., Piedmont, OK 73078, as we follow the ancient pattern of worship given in the New Testament and practiced by the earliest Christians. Our worship is every Sunday at 10:00 AM and 1:00 PM. Send me an email or text if any would like this document for your own use. 3816 Tambos Trl, Edmond, OK 73034 916-804-3787, papagreg@aol.com.

NATIONS THAT FORGOT GOD

By PAUL O. NICHOLS

In this day and time we need to be informed and wise to the promises of God, both good and bad. The apostle Paul says, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. 11:22).

We are warned in the scriptures that "in the last days perilous times will come" (2 Tim. 3:1). During our lifetime we have not seen more perilous times than the days in which we now live. "Wars and rumors of wars" is the order of the day. Weapons of mass destruction are a threat to the security of the world. Some nations have atomic weapons and can deliver them to any part of the world for the destruction of their enemies. Diplomacy and sanctions and threats of other nations do not deter the building of arsenals of weapons which can pinpoint and destroy an object thousands of miles away. Immorality of every description is practiced without impunity by people who justify living like

animals. Marriage of same sex couples is being pushed to be legal, and law makers of our country practice immoral relations and excuse their conduct to make it acceptable by law. Every year the murder of millions of innocent babies is now justified under the "right circumstances" in our "civilized society". Rape and robbery are everyday occurrences. Human life is cheap and murders of innocent victims fill our newscasts. Child abuse and murders of children by their own parents and others is a common occurrence. Our Justice system is in peril and our courts are often controlled by judges who care nothing about what God has to say, but hand down decisions based on human reasoning and laws passed by officials who have no regard for what the Bible teaches, and who ridicule people who do. Prisons cannot be built fast enough to house all the criminals. Prayer and the name of Jesus Christ are forbidden in public schools. Laws are passed to stop the mouths of those who would condemn any kind of sin, and a person can be charged and sent to Jail for preaching against something the Bible condemns ("law of antidiscrimination"). However, as far as Christians are concerned, members of the church of Christ, we are not involved in politics and this has nothing to do with politics. It makes no difference who belongs to what or what station in life he may occupy, if the word of God condemns some practice, it is wrong. If a thing is right by the Bible we try to defend it and uphold it. Jude the apostle says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). And that is an obligation bound by the word of God. We also need to be reminded that "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD" (Psa. 17:15).

True Christians are a peaceful, loving and law abiding people, who are taught by the word of God to submit to the laws of the land; wherever they live. That is, if they are not contrary to the law of God. As said by the apostle Peter, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:28). If rulers and lawmakers demand submission of Christians under any and all circumstances, they need to answer the question asked by Peter and John when the high court of the Jews demanded of them something contrary to the command of Jesus. "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God,

judge ye" (Acts 4:19). No, God's law has priority.

Christians, the followers of Christ, are a praying people. We believe "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" James 5:16), And also we believe that John revealed the truth when he wrote, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14). One of the things we are told to pray for are those who have the rule over us. The apostle Paul says, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (1 Tim. 2:1-3). We must be careful not to be among those who "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities" Jude verse 8). Civil government is of God; "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Rom. 13:1, 2). "They are ministers of God..." (verse 4). That is, according to the divine plan of civil government. But we still have to remember to "obey God rather than men" if it contradicts the word of God (Acts 5:28),

The whole world is in spiritual and economic peril today because of the corruption of people who have dealt dishonestly with their fellow men. "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:10). We are on the brink of disaster, and the love of money is at the root of it all. Greed is at the bottom of the problem. Infidelity, doubt and disbelief; disregard for things high and holy has turned the world upside down. People are losing their jobs, homes are being lost, pensions have been destroyed, and in general the future is uncertain. Churches are closing their doors because they have over-spent, and attendance is down. Fun and games and entertainment in the guise of religion motivated them, with total disregard for a "thus saith the Lord". And many persons who formerly were church goers, decided they did not need God in their lives. Now look at the mess we are in. But didn't the word of God warn, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and the nations

that forget God”? Think about it! Maybe now if we have any sense at all we will be more inclined to let God have a say about things we need to hear. A solution to the problem was given in the Bible long ago : “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (2 Chron. 7:14).

Nations that forget God shall be turned into hell!

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THINGS TO CONSIDER....continued from page one

they call it by designations like those in the following sample. I may have overlooked some, but these are sufficient to make the point.

“My church” (Jesus speaking), Matthew 16:18

The church, Colossians 1:18

Church of God, Acts 20:28 (NKV)

Church of the Lord, Acts 20:28 (NASB)

Churches of Christ, Romans 16:16

Body of Christ, Ephesians 4:12

Church of the living God, 1 Timothy 3:15

Church of the Firstborn, Hebrews 12:23

First, one fact immediately stands out about this list. Each designation calls attention to the divine ownership of the church. It is the church “of God,” “of the Lord,” “of Christ,” “of the living God,” or “of the Firstborn” etc. The writers of the New Testament never name the church by using abstract nouns like “grace,” “life,”

and “fellowship,” or even ultra-contemporary labels like, “Journey,” “Bridge,” “Foundry,” “Mosaic,” and “Generation” (another list of common names that Rainer calls the “Five biggies of the last ten years”). This may be what the churches of men call themselves, but the church of Jesus Christ is of divine origin and ownership and thus cannot not be renamed for the sake of mere novelty or the all-important “relevance.”

Second, it is important to notice that the New Testament authors never use the above designations in a sectarian sense. In other words, the above list is not to be understood as an exclusive catalog of “scriptural names for my denomination and yours.” Rather, all the above designations equally apply to the same institution, the unified company of those saved by the blood of Jesus—“the church;” not only in the first century but in every century.

A third principle to consider here is that the above names do not refer to a so-called “invisible church” that exists in all denominations. I refer to the common practice in evangelical circles of using man-made names to refer to a particular congregation or fellowship (like Rainer’s list) but using the above Biblical names to refer to “all Christians in all fellowships” (the so-called “invisible church”). Such convention is foreign to New Testament usage. The New Testament always has one unified body in view when it uses the above designations—not an “invisible church” in all denominations.

What about the Name “Church of Christ”?

Someone may ask, “What about the name ‘Church of Christ’? Aren’t you using this name in a sectarian sense?” As demonstrated above, the institution that goes by the name “church of Christ” is also properly called “the church,” “the church of God,” “the church of the Lord,” “the body of Christ,” “the church of the Living God,” “the church of the Firstborn,” as well as “the church of Christ” (and perhaps others in the New Testament). Again, none of these are sectarian labels. And any member or congregation among the churches of Christ who uses the name in a sectarian sense is wrong and needs to repent and change their practice. However, the name church of Christ is the designation the church uses today to identify herself among all the myriads of denominations in which she finds herself. In a “perfect world” where all who name the name of Christ would be in unity, where sectarian division would

not exist, the church would need not need to select a “label” to differentiate itself. It would simply be “the church.” But in a world fraught with religious division and sectarian distinctions, the church of Christ makes itself known by this Biblical designation, while at the same time understanding, and teaching its members, that it is no more “the church of Christ” than it is “the body of Christ,” “the church of the Lord,” “the church of the firstborn” or any of the other New Testament designations.

In closing, it is also true that even a “false church” could take one of these Biblical names and thus claim to be “the true church.” But just wearing a name does not prove anything in and of itself. At the same time, however, the converse is certainly true also. Churches that wear unbiblical names thereby identify themselves as something other than “the true church.” This fact is evident because we know by reading the New Testament what the true church is called. Thus, even though wearing a scriptural name does not make everything right, clearly wearing an unscriptural name is not right either. Hence, the churches of Christ today call upon all who name the name of Christ to abandon labels, names, and practices foreign to the New Testament and stand together on a “Thus saith the Lord” in all matters of faith and practice.

ANOTHER LOOK....continued from page two

living, and worse, their insistence that their worldliness is not wrong, etc., furnish ample proof of this.

Our Lord told of the fellows who received the talents of great value, and two of them did very well. Both doubled the value of what they had received! Both received great praise from their master. This part of the parable has been taught by us for years, and well it should have been. It illustrates the reward we may expect after giving our very best to the Cause of Christ. Brethren, we don’t have to depend on men to reward us. We may depend on the Lord, the righteous judge, to reward us fairly and honestly on that final day. He will be just; we may be sure.

It is the third man we are interested in at the moment. He received only a single talent. However, it also represented great worth and should have been treated as such. I think we have missed some things about this

fellow. Listen, as he faces his master. “Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou has not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: Lo, there thou hast that is thine.” (Matthew 25:24,25)

What did this man say? He has actually asserted that his master is an “hard” man. This word, according to Richard Trench (Notes on the Parables, page 227) is an “epithet properly applied to fruit or wine, which is crude, unripe, sour, wanting in mellowness,” etc. Does this sound like the meek and lowly Christ? Not at all, and it brought a severe rebuke from the master of the servant. Listen: “Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed;” Publisher’s note: We are inclined to think this was spoken in the form of a question to this wicked servant rather than a simple statement. “Thus: thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed?” Our Lord is not such an individual, we know that. This last must have been spoken as a rebuke. J.W. McGarvey noted that “It was because the servant ignored his obligations as a servant that the master appeared a hard man in demanding a return of more than he had given.” (Commentary on Matthew and Mark, page 218) Emphasis mine, DLK. He continued: “In the answer, the right of the Lord to the time and labor of the servant is waived, and he is condemned on his own ground....”

A similar conversation is found in Luke 19:22 in the parable of the pounds. Trench contends that this is a separate parable and we agree, though it is similar. This “one talent man” was not able to bear the blame he deserved and so tried to put the blame for his failure on the Lord! People often do this when confronted with a failure. “It’s not my fault. This wouldn’t have happened if you hadn’t done thus and so.” The one talent man had possessed the talent for a long time. He had been given just as long as the other two men had been given to accomplish an increase. Whatever he had been doing, it was not taking care of business. (Today, some church members are so engrossed in the world they have no time to really live the Christian life.) Now, he is faced with the consequences; and he refuses to accept them. It sounds very much like some of us today, does it not? However, the end for this man was disastrous. His talent was taken away and given to the fellow who now had ten. He was then cast into outer darkness where there was to be weeping and gnashing of teeth. What a good

warning for us!

This is a graphic picture of a slothful, or lazy, man who is lost. We must not allow this to be us.

Think on these things DLK

Announcement

NEW BOOK - Description: The denominational world has championed the case for Christians drinking alcohol socially long as it doesn't lead to drunkenness. This is the accepted position by most Bible commentators, and there are many in the Lord's church who say Amen. There are several things that have contributed to this mixing of oil and water or the Christian and alcohol. In this brief book, Aaron Battey and Trever Calvert give a concise and simple explanation of what the Bible teaches on this subject.

Price: \$5 each (shipping not included)

Contact: Aaron Battey - ambattey@yahoo.com

CHURCH WORK - My reason for writing is to see if you would put a short notice in the next OPA. I have been working with Roger Owens doing church work in NW Nebraska. We have been going out there about every three months and staying through two Sundays. We are hoping someone would be interested in doing evangelistic work out there. There is quite a bit of interest there as a result of the LTBS program as well as mailouts. The area really could use someone. Thank you. For further information please contact me or Roger Owens. —Larry Combs

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, October 15. Since last report we have preached a couple of times at home, at Stockton, and are to be at Turlock this coming Lord's Day. Things are well with us and we pray with our brethren as well. Preachers: we need your reports and articles.

Carl M. Johnson, 1400 Northcrest Dr., Ada, OK 74820, carlmj33@gmail.com, Oct. 13. We had a wonderful meeting at the Odom congregation, near Dora, Missouri.

A lot of folks from the community came and we had a full house nearly every service. Two women were restored during the meeting. One of them had been out of the church for several years and she reminded me that I had baptized her and both of her parents during a meeting at the Odom 51 years ago! Seems like yesterday to me. Time really is fleeting. I recently preached at Davis, Oklahoma and a couple was restored to the church there. Cullen Smith is conducting a Gospel meeting this week here at home and he baptized a young man from the community Monday night. We are having good crowds and Cullen is doing an excellent job preaching, I am scheduled to preach at McAlester, Oklahoma (Oct. 24), and we are to begin a meeting in Lodi, California on November 4. Please keep us in your prayers.

Billy D. Dickinson, 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com, Sept. 29. While this year started off slow for me, I will have held 5 meetings by the time we get to 2022, Lord willing. My meeting in Paris, TX back in August was spiritually uplifting to my soul on several levels. What a blessing it was to spend time with William St. John and Bruce Roebuck, two veteran preachers I've known and admired for years, and it's obvious that their influence has helped to produce a strong congregation that has grown spiritually and numerically. We had visitors from the community at almost every service, something that isn't always true here and there, and I did my best to point them to Christ and His saving gospel. We also had great cooperation from nearby congregations with two other preachers visiting one or more services - Jerry Dickinson from Texarkana, TX and Randy Tidmore from McAlester, OK. I'm thankful that my wife, Judy, was able to be there for the first part of the week and we both enjoyed grand hospitality and visiting with old friends. I now have two meetings left to hold in 2021 - Nov. 4-7 at Seymour, MO and Dec. 1-5 at Council Hill, OK. Jacob Kelso is working with the Seymour congregation and we will knock on doors to make sure people of the community know about it. Incidentally, this will be my first time at Council Hill, adding to my excitement of being with them, and everyone in driving distance is invited to come and help us out. The work here at Jamesville continues and we have recently had visitors from far and near, including some from the community. There seems to be a growing sense of enthusiasm among us and we have a lot to be optimistic about as we head toward a new year. May the Lord help us all to stand fast in the faith and seek those things which are above!

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

THE MOST IMPORTANT MAN IN THE WHOLE CAMP - AND HE IS ANONYMOUS

By JERRY DICKINSON

“So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom, and they marched on that roundabout route seven days; and there was no water for the army, nor for the animals that followed them. And the king of Israel said, ‘Alas! For the LORD has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab.’ But Jehoshaphat said, ‘Is there no prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?’ So one of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, ‘Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah.’ And Jehoshaphat said, ‘The word of the LORD is with him.’ So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.” (2 Kings 3:9-12)

Jehoram, the son of Ahab and Jezebel, becomes king of Israel after the death of his brother Ahaziah. Amazingly, Jehoram takes down a monument and pillar to Baal that his father had erected, however, he still allows the calf worship installed by Jeroboam. Apparently, he claims some sort of allegiance to Jehovah. The problem is that he thinks he can curry the favor of the LORD and maintain the original sin of Jeroboam (calf worship) at the same time. You cannot worship God in an unauthorized and unscriptural way! We must worship God, Jesus declared to the Samaritan woman, in spirit and in truth. Worshipping in spirit without the truth is not worshipping Him at all! Nevertheless, Jehoram decides to go to war against Moab and he is convinced Jehovah is with him.

In fact, he even convinces good king Jehoshaphat to go with him. They march south and the king of Edom joins the expedition. The three kings have a massive army along with servants, cooks, and of course animals to sustain them. The problem is they get into the desolate country around the Dead Sea and there is no water for the men or the animals. Looks like they had not planned very well and this circuitous route was a mistake. They did not seek God’s counsel before they began their adventure and now they are in a mess. What to do? The king of Israel and the king of Edom have no ideas but good king Jehoshaphat is a true follower of Jehovah. He asks if there is a prophet of Jehovah they can consult. It is then that a servant of Jehoram speaks up and tells them, “Elisha is here!” Apparently, Elisha was in the camp. He had come along on the expedition, no doubt at the command of the LORD.

What is incredible is that the three kings do not seem to know Elisha is in the camp. The most important man in the whole camp - and he is anonymous! Not only do they not know Elisha is in the camp, they do not seem to even know who he is. Certainly, Jehoram should have known him since he was Elijah’s successor but he seems completely unaware of God’s prophet. Jehoshaphat is a different story. Immediately, Jehoshaphat declares that since Elisha was Elijah’s servant the word of the LORD is with him and the kings seek his counsel. Elisha works a remarkable miracle (water appears out of nowhere and fills the ditches he commanded them to dig in the valley) and the three kings defeat Moab.

Is it not true even today that the most important people in the world are anonymous? Who are the most important people in the United States? The president and his cabinet some will answer immediately. Others might say, no it is the courts, specifically the Supreme Court Justices. Or others still might argue that it is really local authorities, governors and mayors, who matter most. The answer to who are the most important people depends on what you mean by important - and important to whom? We are concerned about what is important to God- and consequently who is important to God. In Mark 12:43 Jesus sat with his disciples watching rich and important people casting large sums of money into the treasury at the Temple. Suddenly, he pointed out a widow who cast in two mites (less than a penny) and declared she had put in more than all of the others combined. That poor widow was the most important person in the Temple that day (excluding Jesus of course) but she was anonymous. She is still anonymous (we do not know her name) to the world after two thousand years. But she is not anonymous in heaven! The Lord knows them that are His!

In the old cemetery in Lexington Kentucky the grave of Henry Clay has a monument with a pillar that rises 120 feet above the ground. Just a few yards from that monument is a simple marker for the burial place of J W McGarvey. Not far from there are the graves of Raccoon John Smith and other great restoration preachers. The last time I visited that cemetery I thought that most visitors see the monument to Henry Clay and consider him the most important man buried in the cemetery, but to Christians the most important graves are anonymous, at least to the majority of the world.

When the Lord looks down on this old world from His throne He sees Christians scattered among the nations who are serving Him and praying for His will to be done on earth as in heaven. These are the most important people in the whole world; more important than presidents, judges, governors, etc. As Christians we are the most important people in the world - to our Lord and to those who recognize that we are doomed without counsel from God. We may be anonymous, but so was Elisha. The most important man in the whole camp - and he was anonymous. Remarkable!