

*The Elgin Hills**Examiner*

*“...examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so”
(Acts 17:11)*

Volume 1

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Number 1

The Elgin Hills Examiner – First Issue!

On the apostle Paul’s second journey, he and Silas left Thessalonica and came to Berea where they preached the gospel of Christ. Luke’s inspired history describes the Bereans as “more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, *examining the Scriptures daily* to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

God does not communicate His will through feelings, dreams, visions, or small voices in the night, but through His revealed Word in Christ and His apostles (Hebrews 1:1-3). Because this is so, God places a premium on our learning and doing it. Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:22). Therefore, in order to do God’s will and be saved, we must know what it is! In order to know what it is, we must examine and study it. To encourage investigation, examination, and study of the Scripture, all of which fosters faith in God and obedience, this paper has begun as a work of the Elgin Hills church of Christ.

It is not the work of the New Testament church to provide entertainment, recreation, and social functions, but it is the work of the church to teach and preach the truth. Paul said that the church is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15). That means it is to uphold, support and preach the truth. We are using this paper as a tool to do this.

We welcome investigation. Our plea is to duplicate genuine New Testament Christianity both in individual as well as congregational life. Therefore, our answers to life’s questions in morality and spirituality do not come from other churches, special interest or political groups, a majority in a community, or preachers; rather we go directly to the New Testament, God’s final revelation of His will to mankind (II Tim. 3:16-17). Whatever questions arise as to how we should conduct ourselves, the New Testament either directly or indirectly by Divine principles answers them (see II Peter 1:3-4).

As a congregation of God’s people, the Elgin Hills church of Christ is committed to following the pattern God left for His people in the pages of the New Testament. If we are failing to do something the New Testament requires, you will be our friend to point out our omission. If we are doing something the New Testament does not authorize, again you will be our friend to point out that commission. Our hope is heaven. We pray it is your hope, and that you will do something about it.

–Phillip Owens

Does it Matter What One Believes or Practices?

Many say “No.” A common thought is that if one lives a generally good life, whatever lies beyond the grave (if anything) will be good.

There are a number of logical principles that reasonable people should understand. If these principles are understood, one will easily answer the above question, “Yes.”

Some basic principles and their consequences must first be understood.

1. The God of the Bible exists. If God does not exist, our question is meaningless. If one is not sure that God spoke the universe and human race into existence (Genesis 1), a study of evidences concerning the existence of God is helpful. For every effect there must be an adequate cause. We see the effect, an orderly universe everywhere. There must be an adequate Cause behind it. A being who is powerful, intelligent, and wise enough to create the universe is a reasonable idea. This is also a Bible idea that God expects us to understand, and in fact says people are “without excuse” if they do not understand it (Romans 1:20).

2. The Bible is God’s Word. Is it unreasonable to think that if a God is powerful enough to create the universe, He ought to be able to communicate His ideas to His creation? The truth is, the Bible claims it is from God. Either it is or it is not. The Bible has a wonderful unity in theme, was written by approximately forty different writers living in three continents and separated by at least 1,600 years, yet has no contradictions. Could unaided man ever accomplish such a feat? Fulfilled prophecies and other marks of inspiration attest to the fact that it is everything it claims to be, the inspired word of God (II Timothy 3:16-17). If one believes this, there are other logical considerations.

3. Jesus Christ is God’s Son. Many have illogical ideas about Jesus. They believe He was likely a good man, did some people good, was a wise teacher, had some neat sayings, but they are not sure if He really is Deity.

Consider this: Either Jesus was a liar, lunatic, or the Son of God. If Jesus knew that His claims to be God’s son were false, but He made them anyway, then He lied and His word is unworthy to be read or appreciated at all. He was not even a good man, since good men don’t lie.

If He made claims to Deity or being God’s Son (Mark 2:6-12, and others), but was really a lunatic and didn’t know better, His words would still be unworthy of any consideration, much less to be studied carefully and followed.

However, if He was who He claimed to be, eternal with God and by whom God created the universe (see John 1:1-3,14,18; 8:58), born of a virgin (Matthew 1:18-25), taught as only God could teach (Matthew 7:28-29), performed miracles that convinced honest people He was from God (John 3:1-2), died for our sins (Matthew 20:28), and was raised from the dead declaring and confirming His deity (Romans 1:4), then everything He said describes things exactly as they are, and is worthy of our utmost consideration!

If the above are true, inevitable consequences follow.

1. God’s word is the only standard of authority. My thoughts, feelings, wishes, or what a majority may think does not determine what one believes or practices. Only God has the right to tell us what to believe and practice because of who He is!

2. As God’s creation, our only choice is to listen to Him and do His will. Again, if the above matters are true, because of who He is, God has a right to tell us what to believe and do, and He has!

3. God has always spoken to man, given him instructions, and held him responsible for doing His will. This is evident from the beginning (Genesis 2, 3) and has ever been so. God told Adam and Eve that they could eat of every tree except one, and gave the consequences if they did (Gen. 2:16-17). They disobeyed (Genesis 3) and the consequences of death and alienation came as a result. Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall

judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). If the above mentioned facts are true, not only must we believe what the Scripture states, we must do the Lord’s will.

Man has sinned (violated God’s will, I Jno. 3:4), but due to God’s love, He worked a plan by which He could maintain His justice, and at the same time save man from his sins. This involved Jesus Christ. We know from observation as well as by God’s word that all accountable people have sinned (Rom. 3:23). God’s holiness and justice demands that sin be punished. However, God’s love demonstrated in sending Jesus Christ made it possible for sinful man to be forgiven, and at the same time God’s justice could be maintained (Rom. 3:24-26). According to Scripture, if a person doesn’t believe on Jesus as God’s remedy for sin, such a person rejects God’s only plan to save. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6). Regardless of what some may think, if people reject Jesus as God’s Son, they reject their only means of being saved eternally (Hebrews 10:28-29).

Many Scriptures demand that we believe and live as God demands. It is impossible to read the Bible and come to any conclusion except that God demands we accept His plan, and live as He directs.

1. God demands we believe on Him and His Son or we will be lost. “Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him” (Heb. 11:6). Jesus said, “Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Obviously, it matters what one believes, if the Bible means what it says!!

2. Repentance is absolutely necessary or we will be lost. Jesus said, “Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish” (Luke 13:3). When believing Jews asked the apostle Peter what to do to be saved from their sins, Peter said, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins” (Acts 2:38). Obviously, it matters what one believes and practices relative to repentance. Without repenting people will die in their sins.

3. Baptism is absolutely necessary for one to be saved. Jesus said it was in the great commission (Mark 16:16), it was preached by the apostles (Acts 2:38; 10:48), and is the act of faith which puts one into a saved relation with God (Matthew 28:18-29; Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12).

4. A morally upright life is necessary. Passages such as Galatians 5:19-21 lists a number of sexual, religious, and social sins that were common during the first century, and are common now. The Bible plainly teaches that those who practice such sins will not live in heaven. Marriage is designed for one man for one woman for life, and divorce for any cause other than fornication and a subsequent remarriage is what the Lord calls adultery (Matthew 19:6-9). There is no way an honest reader can read those passages and conclude that it doesn’t matter what one believes or practices. It all matters!!!

Skepticism concerning Jesus’ deity and the inspiration of the Scripture is rising. While we may not know all the reasons why, if the Scripture is what it claims, God is who He claims, and Jesus Christ was an actual historical character who was also God’s Son, then regardless of what many say, our eternal destiny depends on what we believe and practice. -- *Phillip Owens*

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Volume 1

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Number 2

What About Drunkenness & Social Drinking?

Those who keep statistics tell us that drinking alcohol is the number one “drug” problem in our country, especially among young people. In spite of deaths, broken homes, lost jobs, and physical illnesses due to drinking alcohol, people still drink. Furthermore, many attempt to justify drinking from the Scriptures. What is the truth on the matter?

First, the Greek word for wine (*oinos*), is a general word that does not necessarily imply an alcoholic drink. “Wine” describes the juice from the grape, and it may or may not be alcoholic. That is determined by the context. While there are obvious cases where wine is described as an alcoholic drink (due to its effects), sometimes it describes what we call grape juice. There is *more* evidence that the wine Jesus changed water into was grape juice than an alcoholic type (John 2:1-11), and this is one of the few passages some people think could possibly justify drinking alcohol!

Second, Bible “wines” were not of the high alcoholic content characteristic of our wines today because people of that day did not have distillation processes capable of producing such. Therefore, even wines described in the Scripture that were fermented were much lower in alcoholic content. It is therefore a false parallel to compare wines of our day to even the fermented wines of the first century.

Third, while some Bible believers who desire to drink alcohol admit that the Bible condemns drunkenness (see I Corinthians 6:10; Galatians 5:21 and others), they believe that social drinking or a beer now and then does not violate Divine law. However, the Bible condemns various stages of drinking intoxicating beverages from drunkenness (to the point of staggering or passing out) to what would amount to a cocktail party, or social drinking. I Peter 4:3 says, “For we *have spent* enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, **drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties**, and abominable idolatries” (New King James Version). “Drinking parties” is translated “**banquetings**” in the King James Version.

In his book, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, Richard Trench says of the word translated “**banquetings**,” “the drinking bout, the banquet, the symposium (a drinking together), not of necessity excessive,...but giving opportunity for excess” (p. 225).

Did you notice the above, “not of necessity excessive,...but giving opportunity for excess”? This certainly describes the “happy hour,” cocktail parties, social drinking, and “a friendly glass of beer”! When it comes to drinking alcoholic beverages, let us have this attitude, “Avoid it, pass not by it; Turn from it, and pass on” (Prov. 4:15). *—p.a.o*

What about the loose use of God's name in everyday speech?

From names of movies (such as "O God" with George Burns) to interjections ("My God!" "My Lord!"), to euphemisms (Gosh, Golly, Gee, for heaven's sake, etc.) to the high, reverential and holy use of God's name in worship songs (*Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah! Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*), God's name is often used with little thought. I was asked about the above question forming the title of this article, and pray this article helps answer such questions.

First, God has always been displeased with any flippant, frivolous and profane use of His name. The *first* commandment of the Ten intended *respect for God's Being* ("Thou shalt have no other gods before me," Ex. 20:3), the *second prohibited any approach to God through a man-made device* ("Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above," Ex. 20:4), and the *third* was designed to *guarantee respect and reverence for His name* "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain," Ex. 20:7). To use something in "vain" is to use it in a frivolous, irreverent manner.

There is also evidence that this command was linked to the Jews' swearing (calling on a higher being, place or thing as a witness to the truthfulness of one's words) by God's name. Leviticus 19:12 states, "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, and *profane* the name of thy God: I am Jehovah." To call God therefore as a witness to one's word and at the same time lie, put God in association or league with a lie! It *profaned* His name!

Psalm 111:9 says, "Holy and *reverend* is his name," speaking of God's name. New Testament teaching corresponds. Jesus taught that our prayers should be characterized by utmost respect for God's name – "Our Father who art in heaven, *Hallowed* be thy name" (Matt. 6:9). We don't *hallow* something by speaking of it lightly or using it in a frivolous manner. Therefore, we are to be careful in our use of God's name.

Second, any euphemistic use of God's name and things related uniquely to God profanes divine things and violates the implied teaching in Matthew 5:33-37. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that whereas Jews had been told not to "for swear" (swear falsely), Christians are not to swear at all (Matt. 5:33-37). Further, Jesus stated that to swear by any thing greater than man, whether it be by heaven (God's throne), earth (God's footstool), or Jerusalem (the King's city), actually involved God. Similar language is used in Matthew 23:16-22 where Jesus condemned the Pharisees for splitting hairs on things by which they swore in order to justify lying! The point is that one better be extremely careful in how he uses not only God's name, but names referring to things that pertain particularly or uniquely to God, such as heaven, hell, Jesus, etc.

Euphemisms are mild terms to express a repugnant or disagreeable idea. One might euphemistically say a person "passed away" or "expired" for "died." Similarly, some Christians who see the error in using God's name as "filler" in sentences, or for interjections expressing surprise, wonder, amazement, or such like, do *not* see any error in using euphemisms that describe the same thing. However, one may check practically any reputable dictionary for the meaning of these by-words and easily see their connection to God. Following are a few.

Gosh. "A minced form of God: often used interjectionally as a mild oath,...a softened form of God, used as a mild oath" (*Webster*). Occasionally is used in a hyphenated fashion such as "Gosh-awful." Such would make it an adjective used euphemistically.

Golly. "...an exclamation of surprise, a euphemism for God. It is often used in conjunction with the word 'by,' i.e., By golly!" (*New World Dictionary*.)

Gee Whiz. Gee is a euphemistic contraction of the name Jesus. It is used as an interjection and to express surprise. In essence, to say *Gee* is to say Jesus. *Whiz* is slang for anything outstanding or excellent. To combine the two (Gee Whiz) forms a mild oath which joins Jesus to something extraordinary. Again, it is a *vain* and *profane* use of Jesus' name.

Guy Woods has an article along these lines and I quote from him below:

“Good gracious, Good grief, My goodness! etc. These are all mild oaths, where the word good or goodness, is used euphemistically for God. (See Webster’s New World Dictionary.) There are many forms of this usage, such as Goodness sake! Goodness knows! Thank goodness! – all ejaculatory and exclamatory expressions in reference to the goodness of God, but used slangily and for emphasis. One who thus speaks calls God to witness to the statement with which the oath is associated. ‘In goodness knows who it could have been, it means God only knows and I do not; in goodness knows it wasn’t I, it means God knows it and could confirm my statement’ (*American English Usage, Nicholson*).

“Heavens! Good Heavens! For Heaven’s Sake! Are all statements of exclamatory character, in which the heavens are called to witness to the truth of the statement made, or to support the affirmation. All such expressions when used as by-words, as slang, and in flippant, frivolous fashion, violate our Lord’s injunction: ‘Swear not at all: neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King’ (Matt. 5:34).” (*Questions and Answers Open Forum, pp. 180-183*).

Of course all the above should not prohibit us from mentioning God’s name, but caution us to use it in a respectful, reverent manner. Several instances of such occur in the Scripture such as “God forbid,” “If God wills,” and “The Lord grant mercy.”

Like many physical and mental activities, our speech develops habits. If we are in the habit of making any profane use of God’s name, let us stop! Consider what we say. Think! Words convey ideas. What we should desire to do is convey ideas that express reverence, devotion and respect for God, not disrespect through profaning His high and holy name. -- *Phillip Owens*

The Spirit or the Letter of the Law?

By Leon Mauldin

Joe and Tom are discussing the subject of obedience. Joe believes that it is important to search out the meaning of scripture, and then carefully follow and obey biblical teaching. Tom thinks his friend Joe is like the Pharisees. His position is this: “God doesn’t demand that we follow the letter of the law. That’s legalistic. Just so we go by the spirit of the law, that’s what counts.”

Who is right, Joe or Tom? At first glance it appears that Tom has a point. After all, 2 Corinthians 3:6 says, “for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” But a closer look at the context clarifies that the word “letter” here means the Old Covenant, “written and engraved on stones” (2 Cor. 3:7). It “kills” in that when one sinned he stood condemned, but the law itself could not justify, or make one righteous. The “Spirit” here means the New Testament (2 Cor. 3:6). It is in the Gospel of Christ that salvation is provided.

Further, as one looks at Jesus’ clashes with the Pharisees, though He rebukes them for slavishly following the doctrines and traditions of men, it is noteworthy that He never once rebukes them for too carefully following the commandments of God. In fact, Jesus Himself said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). Once He asked the question, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say” (Luke 6:46)?

Friends, there is no doubt that salvation is by the grace and mercy of God.(Eph. 2:8) But God does care how we treat His word.

Joe is right. *Salvation is conditioned upon our understanding and obedience of the truth of God’s word.*

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Volume 1

March 2006

Number 3

What about the thief on the cross?

Most people who do not believe baptism has anything to do with one's salvation cite the thief on the cross as a model case of conversion. Usually, people who have heard or taught that salvation comes at the point of faith take this position. But is the thief a pattern for us to follow in conversion?

The Passage

"And one of the malefactors that were hanged railed on him, saying, Art not thou the Christ? Save thyself and us. But the other answered, and rebuking him said, Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: But this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. And he said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:39-43).

"Hades" means the realm of departed spirits. This is where Jesus' spirit went following His death (read Acts 2:25-28). But Jesus also went to "Paradise" (Luke 23:43). This is usually defined as a place of peace and rest for the dead. Therefore it seems Jesus promised him forgiveness and eternal life.

Things We Do Not Know About The Thief

1. That He Was Not Baptized. Most who deny baptism has a part in God's plan of salvation affirm with great confidence that the thief was *NEVER* baptized. But how do you know? The fact is, you don't know!! John could have baptized him. Luke 3:21 says, "Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also having been baptized,..." which includes a large number around Jerusalem, Judea, "and all the region round about the Jordan" (Matt. 3:5). The penitent thief could have been among that number. Regardless, no one can know for sure if the thief had or had not been baptized, and to affirm that he had not is to presume on the Bible's silence!

2. That He Was Ignorant Of Jesus' Teaching & Life. Some think they can go through life never giving the Lord a second thought, never investigating His claims, then ask him to forgive them at the point of death, "like the thief" they think. However, there is a great difference between the thief and such people as just described. While we can not know exactly what the thief knew, some things are evident, and these could have come by his witnessing Jesus' teaching and miracles.

For instance, he knew of Jesus' innocence ("this man hath done nothing amiss").

He knew of Jesus' power over His kingdom ("remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom"), and from this statement we would infer that he had some concept of Jesus' resurrection, since his request concerned Jesus' activities in His kingdom after both of them died.

Further, his faith was seen as he defended Jesus against the accusations of the other thief (“rebuking him said, Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: But this man hath done nothing amiss”).

Jesus’ behavior would have impacted the thief greatly as they began to crucify Him. Rather than curse and shout at His executioners as would have been common with most criminals, Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34). All of these statements and circumstances indicate that the thief knew more about Jesus than what some would like to believe. Rather than dismiss what Jesus said, as many do today relative to the necessity of baptism, the thief latched on to Jesus’ words and acted on them.

Having said this, there are other principles of rightly dividing the word (II Tim. 2:15) which need to be considered when studying the plan of salvation as it relates to the thief.

Rightly Dividing The Word

1. JESUS HAD POWER TO FORGIVE SINS ON EARTH, & MAKE ANY CONDITIONS AT THAT TIME HE DESIRED. On at least three other occasions (Matt. 9:1-8; Luke 7:40-50; 19:1-10) Jesus taught and worked miracles that people might “know that the son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins” and on occasion during His earthly ministry forgave sins without stipulating *any* conditions (Matt.9:1-8). His purpose in that incident proved His claim to forgive sins, a proof establishing His deity. The incident with the thief is like this. However, these were exceptions and designed for the special purpose of manifesting Jesus’ Deity, not for us to use as “models of conversion.” Jesus could change whatever terms He wanted to suit special occasions.

2. THE THIEF AND JESUS LIVED AND DIED UNDER THE OLD TESTAMENT; WE LIVE UNDER THE NEW. Jesus and the thief were “born under the law” (Gal. 4:4). At the time of Jesus’ conversation with the thief, He had not died, and His New Testament had not gone into force, and wouldn’t even be known until fifty days after His resurrection (see Acts 2:1ff). *The thief never heard* “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mk. 16:16), and “baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19), and “Repent,...and be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins” (Acts 2:38). Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach this – faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins during the forty-day span (Acts 1:3) *after* His death, burial and resurrection. Baptism in the name of Christ (as per Acts 2:38) is *a part of the New Testament* that went into effect beginning on Pentecost, *after the death of both the thief and Jesus Christ* (read Hebrews 10:9-10). The thief’s body was moldering into the dust of the dead when Jesus commissioned His apostles to preach what we need to do.

Further, Jesus nowhere indicates He will change any terms of salvation in the New Covenant! Therefore, it is a mishandling of God’s word to use instructions given in a former age and under jurisdiction of the Mosaic Law and apply them to our age. We are “under law to Christ” (I Cor. 9:21), and Christ’s law, covenant, and testament did not become effective till after He died (read Hebrews 9:15-17). Therefore, the thief lived on the other side of the cross time-wise; we live on this side.

3. BAPTISM OF THE COMMISSION IS INTO THE DEATH OF CHRIST. “Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3) Therefore, it was utterly *impossible* for the thief or anyone else before him to be baptized under the baptism of the commission SINCE CHRIST HAD NOT EVEN DIED.

Conclusion

J. W. McGarvey makes this apt comment: “The example of the penitent robber is a difficult one to follow: he professed faith in Christ and his kingdom when there was no other voice in the whole wide world willing to do such a thing. Any one having such faith in Christ will not put off his confession until the hour of death” (*The Fourfold Gospel*, pp. 728-729).

The honest reader can plainly see that the thief on the cross **is not** a model case of conversion for men and women today. We live on this side of the cross time-wise and under the New Testament

which became effective *after* Christ's death. Jesus and the thief lived under the binding force of the Old Testament.

Do not be misled by religious teachers who seek to negate Jesus' words. Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). **Jesus put both belief and baptism between the sinner and salvation.** The thief never heard those words. However, you have heard them. What will you do with them? For the sake of your eternal well-being, don't let pride, inconvenience, emotions, people you respect, or anything else cause you to miss heaven. Jesus gave conditions for our past sins to be removed. Hear Him (Matt. 17:5) --*Phillip Owens*

Are We Poor?

The Bible says much about our need to be thankful for what we have. "Bless Jehovah, O my soul, **And forget not all his benefits**" (Ps. 103:2) "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; **and be ye thankful.**"(Col. 3:15)

Rather than mope about what some have that we do not have, we should constantly be thankful for the good things we do have.

In fact, one characteristic of a degenerate society that has refused to have God in its knowledge is that of being **unthankful**. Concerning the Gentiles during the 1st century Paul said, "because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, **neither gave thanks**; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:21). Do we live in such a society? Does the sun rise in the east?

Perhaps one reason so many are so unhappy when we live in a land when so many have so much, is because people have everything to live with, but nothing to live for! *Things* only bring temporary pleasure, nothing lasting. However, having a right relation with God, a person can have practically nothing but be perfectly content. Remember where Paul was and what he said while there—Acts 28:30-31; Phil. 4:10-20.

What do we need just to sustain life and go to heaven? Obviously, it is much less than we have, because we live in a time of prosperity unequalled in times before. Therefore, since we have been so abundantly blessed, a thankful heart should characterize each of us, especially when we consider the spiritual and eternal riches and blessings promised the faithful—that which is most significant.

Much of the problem of being unthankful lies with a skewed view toward what we have. If we never compare it to what others before us have gone without, we cannot see how well off we are! Church history has noted sacrifices men have made in the past especially to give people the Bible in their own language. What some have even died to make available only costs us a few dollars to own. We are so rich materially speaking, and rich spiritually, if we are faithful Christians.

Are you a Christian? May we help? Contact us today and we will be happy to visit with you in your home, or meet in a mutually agreeable place to discuss spiritual matters. -- *Phillip Owens*

The Elgin Hills
Examiner

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Volume 1

April, 2006

No. 4

**You are cordially invited to be with the Elgin Hills church of
Christ for two special events this month**

➤ **Saturday, April 29, 6:00 p.m. – Special Lecture**

*"What Does The Bible Teach About The Church Providing For Social
Meals And Recreation?"*

Pat Donahue, speaker

We welcome questions from the audience.

➤ **Sunday, April 30, 3:00 p.m. – Congregational Singing**
Evening worship follows at 4:00 p.m.

All are invited, both Christians and non-Christians

*"...speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and
making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19)*

**Why should churches even discuss the matter of providing
social meals and recreation for its members and others?**

Based on conversations I have had, some would conclude that it is a waste of time even to discuss the above question. Others often say, "I never thought of it." However, this is what we plan to do as mentioned above, and we hope you will join us. Nothing will be said or done to embarrass anyone who agrees or disagrees, but you will find an open investigation into what the Bible teaches the church is to do relative to this matter.

It may come as a surprise, especially to younger readers, that many of the social works churches engage in (recreational teams sponsored, plays and pageants, day-care centers, retreats, showers and teas, physical exercise classes, providing walking tracks, gymnasiums, financial counseling, etc.) are of very recent origin. The fact that something is of recent origin doesn't necessarily make it not Scriptural, but I mention this due to the fact that there was practically universal rejection of these practices among churches of Christ as little as fifty to fifty-five years ago.

In 1951, B. C. Goodpasture was editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, a periodical written and published by a number of gospel preachers. The *Advocate* published the *Gospel Advocate Annual Lesson Commentary* primarily written with Bible teachers in mind. In that book, bro. Goodpasture

wrote: "It is not the mission of the church to furnish amusement for the world or even for its own members. Innocent amusement in proper proportion has its place in the life of all normal persons but it is not the business of the church to furnish it...The church was not established to feature athletics...For the church to turn aside from its divine work to furnish amusement and recreation is to pervert its mission. It is to degrade its mission....Building recreation rooms, and providing and supervising recreational activities at the expense of the church, is a departure from the simple gospel plan as revealed in the New Testament...The church might as well relieve the parents of feeding and disciplining all of the young people at church expense as to take over the job of entertaining and supervising the recreation at church expense" (page 229). It is interesting that most churches claiming to be "of Christ" that build, maintain, and fund these social works now are strong supporters of the *Advocate*. Obviously, changes came along the way. We are not arguing that because something is of recent origin it is unscriptural, we are simply calling attention to the fact that brethren have changed, and that what now is considered common was universally and vehemently opposed by gospel preachers and a leading journal among Christians only fifty years ago.

At some point, Christians changed in their thinking and believed it was Scriptural to take money contributed to the church for its work and use it to construct buildings which included kitchens and large dining rooms, commonly called "fellowship halls." These were not built to feed needy saints, but to provide social functions for well-fed Christians.

Whereas the primary work of the church is to preach the gospel (I Tim. 3:15; I Thess. 1:8), edify saints through teaching (I Tim. 3:15; Eph. 4:11-16), and take care of its own indigent members (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 6:1-6; 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25, 26; I Cor. 16:1-4; II Cor. 8-9), a philosophy known as the "social gospel" began to be prominent in the latter half of the Twentieth Century, emphasizing an ideal social order that is believed to be achieved by solving social problems. Rather than emphasizing the need for salvation from sins and things eternal, a shift in thinking came that prompted brethren to expend the churches' resources and funds in solving economic, health, and other social related issues. Catering to the needs of the "whole man," churches began providing childcare, entertainment, "mothers day out," etc.

One has well identified the difference between these two schools of thought: "The main aim set before Christians (in time past) was to save souls from eternal woe, to have communion with God now and hereafter, and to live God-fearing lives. It was individualistic religion, concentrated on the life to come. Its social effectiveness was largely a by-product. What, now, would have been the result if Christianity had placed an equally strong emphasis on the Kingdom of God, the ideal social order?" (*The Social Principles Of Jesus*, Walter Rauschenbush, pp. 73-74).

That God has placed limits on what the church can do even in the area of benevolence is seen in I Timothy 5:16. Some widows can be supported; some are not to be.

Therefore, the issue is not whether or not brethren should enjoy meals and recreational times together; rather it is a question of authority. Does the New Testament give Divine authority for *churches* to provide for these things from their treasuries? Keep in mind that Jesus said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work lawlessness" (Matt. 7:22-23). "Lawless" works are those for which there is no divine authority, no "law" from God that would authorize their practice. Though some may think they are "helpful" and that they "do good," if something is not authorized, one goes beyond the doctrine of Christ and has not God when he engages in its practice (II John 9).

For these reasons the Elgin Hills church of Christ is having this particular study, and we hope you will join us for it.

-- Phillip Owens

Filling The Church

It is a peculiar thing that some brethren think they can fill the church with worldliness (worldly things that attract) and cause it to grow spiritually. IT IS NOT SO! Things of the world and of the flesh never arouse any kind of response but a fleshly and worldly response. Why would anyone think bringing “loaves and fishes” or entertainment would attract the spiritually minded or make anyone more so? The more banqueting and partying and entertainment is brought in, the more it will require, and worldly and fleshly things will only make the church more worldly until it is swamped and spirituality is lost sight of and forgotten. -- Roy E. Cogdill

True Sincerity

The word “sincere” is a very interesting one. Paul said in Philippians 1:9-10, “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ...”

“Sincerity” or being “sincere” is something a Christian must include in the qualities of the heart. According to the noted commentator Albert Barnes, the word “sincere” means “that which is judged in the sunshine, in the brightest of light. It means literally - ‘without wax.’”

It seems that old time furniture makers, when they didn't use the best wood, filled in the holes and bad spots with wax in order to hide its imperfections from prospective buyers. They would then sell their furniture in subdued light. The better furniture makers began to advertise their furniture as sincere or without wax, and would offer it for sale under the brightest of lights.

When a person is sincere, his words and actions express purity and genuineness of heart. He is not ashamed to have his heart laid bare before both God and man. A sincere individual is one who does what he does in the light, without trying to hide anything from anyone. Furthermore, a sincere person doesn't have his heart chained and shackled with pride, prejudice and make-believe. He's willing to admit when he's wrong, and he humbly asks for forgiveness and makes correction.

Paul closes the Ephesian letter with a blessing to the sincere. He says, “Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.” How about you? Are you sincere (without wax) in your love for Christ? May the Lord help us all to truly be sincere in our love and service to Him. -- Tom Sutherland

The Elgin Hills Examiner

“...examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so”
(Acts 17:11)

Volume 1

May 2006

Number 5

That's Just Your Interpretation

By Mark Larson

That's just your interpretation! How many times has someone said that to you when you attempted to teach him the truth from the Scriptures? Rather than take the message of truth to heart, it is quickly dismissed as *merely* your opinion and not taken seriously at all.

If you have ever heard this before, you know that it is sort of like “hitting a brick wall.” Further discussion of the truth with such a person can be very difficult. The potential for meaningful Bible study is not very promising.

What Is Your way to begin in your says: “That's just your passage over to him and ask interpretation in Bible study *the meaning of* a particular than be discouraged and instead: “I am willing to correct my own position if I demonstrates fairness as which are necessary for Be open-minded and that others might have for Just as we hope for positive teach, we too must change our own beliefs and corrected (e.g., **Acts 18:24-**

Speak in Terms the offer to listen to other Scripture, be sure to include evidence to support your What is it?” Before interpretations to take place, it is important to come to a mutual agreement that true, saving faith is based on the evidence or the teaching of the Scriptures. “*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (**Rom. 10:17**).

We must speak of the importance of providing book, chapter, and verse for the beliefs that we hold (**I Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17**). We must emphasize that a fair hearing must be given to *all* that God has said on the matter to get a proper understanding of God's will. When studying any subject, “*the whole counsel*

Plan Now To Attend Elgin Hills Sunday, June 11 for

The Big Picture of the Bible

3 special lectures on the overall plan
of God to save us.

Questions will be answered such as:

- Why did God have an eternal plan?
- Is there a different God of the Old and New Testament?
- Is sin such a big deal?
- Was Christ's death really necessary?
- What makes our teaching of the gospel so distinctive from our religious friends?

Times: 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m. & 4:00 p.m.

Interpretation? The best response to someone who interpretation” is to hand the for his interpretation. An is simply *an explanation of* passage of Scripture. Rather give up, make this offer hear your interpretation and am wrong. What is it?” This well as humility, both of Bible study (**Prov. 18:12-13**). willing to hear any evidence their beliefs and practices. change in the people we demonstrate a willingness to practices when we are **26**).

of Evidence: When making people's interpretation of this request: “You must have interpretation over mine. allowing an exchange of

of God” (Acts 20:27) should be sought in the pursuit for the truth. Passages must be examined in its proper context. Concordances and Hebrew or Greek Bible dictionaries are very helpful to gather even more evidence.

No Legitimate Interpretations? Sometimes people reject the truth because they are convinced that no interpretation of Scripture can be relied on as the truth. Many are convinced that *every* interpretation involves man’s opinions and thus everything is spun, biased, or slanted to favor a particular doctrine, practice, or personal viewpoint.

Let us admit the fact that there are indeed many interpretations of Scripture offered today that are according to man’s opinions that must be rejected (2 Pet. 3:15-17). However, not all interpretations are false. There are *real* differences between interpretations. Many will lead to eternal destruction, yet only the truth will lead to eternal life (Mat. 7:13-14).

Finding the truth requires a recognition that there is *ultimately* only one right interpretation of the Scriptures. There is only one faith (Eph. 4:5; Jude 3) or one truth (John 8:32; 17:17) that God has revealed to us. God has promised us that we can know what the truth is (1 Tim. 2:4; Eph. 3:4). These facts ought to bring hope to the skeptic who says there are no legitimate interpretations.

Will Any Interpretation of Scripture Do? Sometimes people take the opposite extreme and declare that though there is only one faith or truth, it is too confusing or difficult to find. Many people, in response to the multitude of religious groups and doctrines, conclude that almost any interpretation will do. Rather than rule out certain religious beliefs on the basis of Scripture, there is the desire to respect every belief as *equal* in merit or legitimacy. Many people want to “just get along” and do not want to debate or discuss their differences. The preferred “solution” of many is to just choose the interpretation that *personally* suits you best and call that “the truth.”

Some Interpretations Are Better or More Plausible Than Others: The answer to any confusion or challenge that we may have in searching for the truth is not to choose just *any* interpretation of Scripture! Imagine the trouble we would have in our lives if we handled all of our decisions this way. For example, would we be willing to randomly choose a marriage partner? Would we choose just any car to drive or any house to live in? Would any of us be willing to invest our hard earned savings into just any type of investment? When we are sick, would we decide that just any medicine or treatment will make us well? Of course not! In making *any* important decision in life, to choose wisely requires that we learn all that we can about the issue or problem that is at hand. The same is true in deciding what we should believe and practice in religion from the Scriptures.

So which interpretation of Scripture should one choose? To sift through the interpretations that are *possible* and decide on *only one* requires that we accept the interpretation that is *most plausible, probable, or credible*. Rather than foolishly accept just any interpretation of Scripture, let us choose the one that provides the *most* evidence (e.g., true to the context of the passage, in harmony with parallel passages on the same subject, true to the actual meaning of Bible words, etc.). “So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17).

God Provides Us with Rules for Interpretation: Thankfully, God provides us with some assistance on how to interpret the Scriptures right in the Word itself! The Lord gives us the help we need to determine the truth for what we are to believe and practice in religion. There are four major rules He provides: (1) *Direct statements or commands* we must obey (e.g., John 14:15; 2 Pet. 3:1-2); (2) *Divinely approved examples* we are to follow (e.g., 1 Pet. 2:21; Phil. 3:17; Acts 2:42); (3) *Necessary implications*, meaning conclusions we can make from what is implied in Scripture (e.g., Mat. 22:41-46); (4) *Respect for the silence of God*, meaning we restrict ourselves to what God has revealed in the Scriptures to determine His will (Deut. 29:29). We do not add to it nor take away from it (Rev. 22:18-19). Let us all be true to God and respect His word in the interpretation of the Scriptures.

Interpretation versus Belief

“Interpreters” explain or give the meaning of words from one language to another language. No one would knowingly say of a competent interpreter, “Well, that’s just his interpretation,” meaning that his

translation is only an opinion, has no solid basis to support it, and should be discounted as unworthy of any consideration. If he knows both languages and is honestly doing his work, he can be depended on.

Most don't need an "interpretation" of the daily newspaper. It is fairly self explanatory. If there are several articles in one newspaper on one breaking story, reading all the articles gives one a clearer picture of the event. On the whole, this is true of the Bible. It has been my observation that "interpretation" or understanding what the Bible says is not that big a problem. Believing it is! Reliable translations of the Bible use English words understandable to most people. Where then does the problem lie? It lies in rejecting what is the obvious.

Is Jesus Christ deity (God's Son), or merely a historical character? Jesus claimed to do the works of His Father (Jno. 5:17, 18), to be able to give life (Jno. 5:26) which only God could do, to be sent from God (Jno. 5:36), to be eternal with God (Jno. 8:58), and to be "one" with the Father (Jno. 10:30). He taught as only one who had divine qualities could teach (Matt. 7:28-29). Honest people recognized that His words and works were signs that He was from God (John 3:2) His resurrection from the dead was God's sign of signs that Jesus of Nazareth, born of a woman and living as men live (Phil. 2:5-8) was also deity (see Romans 1:4). These passages are straightforward. If one believes the Bible to be God's Word, how much "interpretation" does one need on this subject? It is as straightforward, and I would say much more so, than most headline stories in newspapers. He was both a historical figure and Immanuel, God with us (Matt. 1:23).

Why then don't people "understand" this? Likely it is because of all the consequences. If Jesus is God's Son, all He says is significant – it is authoritative. His words are true, morality is important, how we deal with each other has eternal bearing, and He will judge us in the final day (Jno. 12:48). We should therefore live our lives according to His teaching. Therefore, Jesus' being God's Son is not so much interpretation as it is belief!

The Bible teaches there is "one church." Most Bible students understand that Jesus said He would build His church (Matt. 16:18), that it began through the preaching of the gospel of Christ after His death and resurrection (Acts 2:22-47), that saved people were added to it (Acts 2:47), and that the apostles' words constituted the Supreme Court on all questions (see Matt. 10:40; Acts 2:42; 15:24; Galatians 1:6-9; I Cor. 11:34; 14:37). These passages are straightforward. The New Testament also teaches that there is "one body" (Eph. 4:4), and that body is the church (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18). It is into that "one body" that penitent believers are baptized (see also I Cor. 12:13). While there were a plurality of "local" churches or assemblies of Christians during the first century ("the churches of Christ salute you," Rom. 16:16), they were all taught the same gospel (I Cor. 4:17). Apostolic instructions concerning their worship, work, and organization were the same (I Cor. 1:1-2; 16:1). Church historians recognize these truths. They also recognize that an apostasy was predicted (Acts 20:29-31; II Thess. 2:1-12) and that it came.

While there were religious sects during the first century (such as Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Essenes and others) Christ and His gospel were intended to eradicate them and bring everyone into "one body" (read carefully Ephesians 2:11-22 and John 17:20-21). Since Christ is not divided, and neither Paul nor anyone but Christ was crucified for us, and we are not to be baptized into anyone except Christ, then Paul argues that we "speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10-13).

This is straightforward and really needs no "interpretation." The problem is that given hundreds of years from the first century, religious division, a plurality of man-made churches, and a failure to use only the Scriptures as our authority, we now have religious chaos. To say that the New Testament teaches there is one body, one church, sounds so narrow to many. Yet it is the truth. Why do people have problems with such an "interpretation"? It is not because the Bible "means different things to different people," but because people do not believe it.

Don't be fooled by the "just your interpretation" idea. Believe the Bible can be understood (Eph. 3:3-5) and believe and obey the gospel. – *Phillip Owens*

The Elgin Hills Examiner

“...examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so”
(Acts 17:11)

Volume 1

June-July 2006

Number 6

Your Invitation to Hear the Gospel of Christ July 16-21

Joseph Casimier, preaching



Sunday	9:00 a.m. <i>Searching the Scriptures</i> 10:00 a.m. <i>Can we trust the Bible?</i> 4:00 p.m. <i>Eternity in the heart</i>
Monday	7:00 p.m. <i>The Old and New Covenants</i>
Tuesday	7:00 p.m. <i>The church that Christ built</i>
Wednesday	7:00 p.m. <i>The good life</i>
Thursday	7:00 p.m. <i>Unspotted from the world</i>
Friday	7:00 p.m. <i>Books will be opened</i>

Bible Facts about the significance of the Gospel!

- **It is God’s “power” to save us.** “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation” (Rom. 1:16). The word “gospel” means “good news.” Therefore, this is God’s “message” to us. It is not a feeling, what we think, a “church creed,” but God’s message concerning our salvation.
- **There is only one gospel but many perversions.** This was true even during the first century and it is true now. Further, if we teach or believe and obey an altered gospel, we are accursed. “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:6-9).
- **We must obey the gospel. If we do not, we are condemned along with those who refuse any knowledge of God.** “...to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (II Thess. 1:7-9). “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (I Pet. 4:17)?
- **We are to preach the gospel to everyone.** God’s message concerning our salvation is the one true gospel. Since there are many perversions of it, we see the great significance of helping people learn the difference between truth and error. Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:15-16).
-- Phillip Owens

Who is a Christian?

Some speak of Christian families, Christian schools and colleges, “born again Christians” (which is a redundancy since one who has been born again is a Christian), Christian countries, Christian Brother’s Brandy, and in recent years some political conservatives have been labeled a part of the “Christian Right.” In one of Webster’s definitions, a Christian is defined as “a decent, respectable person.” However, I have known some atheists who were “decent, respectable” people, so that obviously doesn’t describe a Christian. Some claim they are Christians, yet never worship nor study the Bible. Is it possible to know who is a Christian? All who read the New Testament understand that Paul, Peter, Barnabas, Timothy and others were Christians. However, the word “Christian” is found only three times in the Bible – Acts 11:26; 26:28; and I Peter 4:16. Like other Bible words, we should be interested in God’s definition. The balance of this article describes who a Christian is based on those three passages.

Acts 11:26 reads, **“and when he (Barnabas) had found him (Paul), he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”** From this we may learn a number of lessons:

1. The Name “Christian” Is A Divinely Given Name. The passage says “the disciples were *called* Christians...” Some say the name, “Christian” was given in derision by the enemies of Christ. However, the background of the word “called” implies the name was given by God. In every other instance in the New Testament where the word here translated “called” is used, it designates a warning, admonition, or a name given **by God** (see Matt. 2:12,22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; Romans 7:3; Hebrews 8:5; 11:7; 12:25). One instance of this is in Romans 7:2-3. If a wife is divorced from a husband for a cause other than fornication, and marries another, the Bible says, “she shall be **called** an adulteress.” While most in the world would not call her an adulteress, God does! Therefore, the only people who are truly Christians are those described as such in the New Testament. Claiming to be one does not make one a Christian.

2. A Christian Is One Who Is A Member Of The Lord’s Church. Christians in Antioch “gathered together *with the church*.” The Bible knows nothing of one being a Christian yet out of the Lord’s church. The truth is, when one obeys the gospel through belief, repentance, and baptism, he is then saved from past sins, and the Lord adds him to His church (please read Acts 2:36-47). Therefore, salvation and membership in the Lord’s church mean one and the same thing. Most denominations do not teach what the Lord commissioned His apostles to preach that people must do to be saved (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). Therefore, if people have been taught wrong, they have not been baptized right, and are still in their sins. One who has never been forgiven of sins is not a Christian. Are you in the Lord’s church about which you read in the New Testament? A genuine Christian described in the New Testament is.

3. A Christian Is One Who Assembles With The Church. Paul, Barnabas and other Christians in Antioch “gathered together with the church.” This means they assembled together, something Christians are commanded not to forsake (Hebrews 10:25). Christians are commanded to do several things in the assembly such as partake of the Lord’s supper on the first day of the week—Sunday (I Cor. 11:23-26; Acts 20:7), contribute as prospered on the first day (I Cor. 16:1-2), sing and pray (I Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19). Therefore, by failing to assemble with the church, a number of other commandments are Christians seldom assemble regularly “with the church,” but one whom God calls a Christian does! Do you worship regularly with the Lord’s church? A genuine Christian described in the New Testament does.

4. A Christian Is A Learner. “...they were gathered together with the church, and *taught* much people.” Christians are *taught* people. A Christian is one who takes every opportunity to learn. He will go where the Bible is taught. Jesus said Christians should “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6). Some claim to be Christians, but never even open their Bibles, much less attend Bible classes among Christians. Certainly a Christian and member of the Lord’s church would want to avail himself of every opportunity to learn more of God’s will. Are you striving to learn more of the Word of God? A genuine Christian described in the New Testament does.

5. A Christian Is A Disciple. "...and that the *disciples* were called Christians first in Antioch." A disciple is one who follows what he has learned. Therefore, a Christian is one who follows the teaching of Christ. Jesus said, "why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)? One who refuses to obey Christ's words is not a disciple and therefore not a Christian, regardless of his claims. The words of Christ are to be the Christian's guide since by these words all will be judged in the last day (John 12:48). Are you following the words of Christ in every relationship? A genuine Christian described in the New Testament does.

6. A Christian Is One Who Is Fully Persuaded In His Belief. The second time the word "Christian" is found is in Acts 26:28 where Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." Both Paul and Agrippa recognized he was not a Christian. To be "almost" persuaded is still not to be a Christian. After an Ethiopian asked Philip the evangelist if he could be baptized, Philip said, "If you believe *with all your heart*, you may" (Acts 8:37). Full persuasion that Jesus is God's Son (John 8:24), a knowledge of what repentance is, and understanding the purpose of baptism is necessary for one to become a Christian. In addition to other reasons, this is one reason why an infant is not a candidate for baptism; he is unable to believe the testimony concerning Christ. Having been sprinkled as an infant and even "confirmed"(?) as an adult is not what the New Testament describes as a Genuine Christian.

7. A Christian Is One Who Is Not Ashamed To Suffer For His Convictions. The last mention of the word "Christian" is in I Peter 4:16—"but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name." A Christian is one who openly confesses his belief in Christ in word and deed before others. Jesus said, "whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33). Therefore, a Christian will not be ashamed to take a firm stand for truth, and against all forms of error and immorality. He will not be ashamed to be different in his/her dress when much that is fashionable is immodest (I Tim. 2:9-10). A Christian will be known to fellow-workers by refusing to use speech characterized by coarse jesting and vulgarity (Eph. 4:29; 5:3-4) and by refusing any part in petty gambling whether it be squares for football games or matching quarters for a coke. This will make him different but he is not ashamed of any consequences which come because he is a Christian. He will be known by his punctuality, honesty in work and word (Col. 3:22-24; Eph. 4:24,28), and regardless of any criticism, he is not ashamed to suffer for being a Christian because he looks to the eternal reward in heaven (I Peter 1:3-5).

Conclusion

We would not want to leave the impression from the above that a person must never make a mistake in order to remain a Christian. Christians stumble and sin. In fact John said if Christians "say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). The life of a Christian is the life of spiritual growth (I Peter 2:1-2; II Peter 3:18), which means we don't know or practice everything we should as soon as we become Christians. However, the Bible teaches that Christians can and should become mature or full-grown spiritually (Heb. 5:14-6:3), a part of which means that sin should be the exception and not the rule (Rom. 6:1-2; I John 2:1). There is a sense in which we should still be growing the day we die (Phil. 3:12-14).

However, when a genuine Christian learns of his sin, he will not remain in it but will repent, confess and pray that God will forgive him (Acts 8:22; I John 1:9). Christians are to strive for the Divine standard mentioned above and be thankful for God's provisions of forgiveness when we stumble.

Are you a Christian? - Phillip Owens

The Elgin Hills Examiner

*"...examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so"
(Acts 17:11)*

Volume 1

August - September 2006

Number 7

Your Invitation to Hear the Gospel of Christ



October 1 – 4
Sunday – Wednesday
Leon Mauldin, preaching

Times of Services:

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. & 4:00 p.m.

Mon. – Wed.: 7:00 p.m.

Subjects: "What Jesus thinks about the churches"

A study of the Seven Churches of Asia, Revelation 2-3

What Are You Religiously?

We understand God's plan to be simple. The Bible tells us all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3). God intends that the hearing of the word produces faith (Rom. 10:17). All are commanded to repent of sins (Acts 17:30). We are to confess unashamedly that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9,10). Upon this basis one is to be baptized (immersed) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). This is what each of us did.

In the New Testament, those who did this were called Christians (Acts 11:26). It is our purpose to be Christians, just as they were. A typical response to this might be, "I know you are Christians, but what denomination are you?" The same question might be asked of those in the 1st Century. To what denomination were those on the day of Pentecost added? We refer to Acts 2, when the church was first established. Verse 47 indicates that the Lord added the saved to the church. Again, God's plan is simple. When one obeys from the heart the Gospel, God adds him to the church. The New Testament church is simply people, men and women who are saved. This is what we are identified with. We claim no denominational affiliation.

Now when these in the New Testament were saved, and added by the Lord to his church, wherever they lived they were to meet together and worship. There were assemblies throughout Judea and Samaria, Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, Greece, etc. These local churches were not differing denominations, but rather as Paul said of Timothy in 1 Cor. 4:17, "...who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." So God's plan includes local churches "everywhere," but all are governed by the same authority, the New Testament Scriptures. So on that basis we make up a local assembly in Elgin Hills, Alabama.

The church is given an important work in which to engage. It is to be busy preaching the Gospel that the lost may be saved (1 Tim. 3:14,15; 1 Thess. 1:8). The church is to edify its members (Eph. 4:14-16). It is to relieve its needy members (Acts 6; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). The local church here is seeking to accomplish this God-given mission to the best of our ability at present, and pray that even more doors will be opened by the Lord. – *Leon Mauldin*

Note: Every Bible event occurred in a real place, unlike the fictitious places passed off as real in the Book of Mormon. Most places the Bible mentions are known and can be visited. Recently, Leon Mauldin visited the sites John mentions in Revelation 2-3 – Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. Bro. Mauldin is well known to many in north Alabama, having preached for a number of years in Lexington. He has preached for the Hanceville church of Christ in Cullman County for the past seventeen years, is a careful Bible student and good preacher. It will do anyone good to hear him preach the gospel. We hope you can come. – *Phillip Owens*

The Relation of Christ to His Church

This is a misunderstood subject. Some believe that the church has nothing to do with one's salvation. The Lord can save an individual and he can never "darken the doors" of any church building and be saved some think. Others believe that the church has practically everything to do with one's salvation. If a church can "sprinkle" an infant and administer Last Rights at the end, little in between matters.

Still others believe that it doesn't matter which church one is a part of, but to be saved people need to be in "some" church. In fact, some think if they just attend or have some relation with some church, somehow God will save them.

The truth is that Ephesians 5:22-33 teaches there is an inseparable relation of Christ to His body, the true church. The teaching is that just as there is a relationship between our physical heads and the bodies to which they are attached and lead, the same is true between Christ and His spiritual body, the church. In this relation, Christ is its head and savior (vs. 23), he loves it and died for it (vs. 25), sanctifies, cleanses and washes it (vs. 26), presents it gloriously and without spot (vs. 27) as people are saved from their sins by His blood and live righteous lives, and He nourishes and cherishes it (vs. 29).

The church's relation to Christ is that it is His body and what He saves (vs. 23), it is to be subject to Christ (vs. 23), holy and without blemish (vs. 27), and it belongs wholly to Him.

As a head directs the activities of the body connected to it, so must the church be directed by its head, Christ. If it refuses to respect the Head's authority, it isn't properly "connected" to the head.

The only way to know if the church of which one is a member is truly the body belonging to Christ, one can ask if the teaching and practice of that church corresponds to the direction of the Head, Jesus.

For example, the Head instructs that the gospel concerning Himself should be preached, that people should believe it, repent, and be baptized to be saved (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:46,47). If the church of which you are a member does not teach this, or modifies it, that church is not following the directions from the Head.

The Head instructs relative to the what, how, and when of worship (I Cor. 14:5, 26, 15, I Cor. 11:23-26; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-4). Preaching and teaching, eating the Lord's supper and giving as one has been prospered the first day of each week, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, and praying are what the Head directs. If the church of which you are a member does not teach and practice this, it is not following the directions from the Head.

The Head directs that members of its body should live righteous and moral lives (Galatians 5:19-21). Each member of the body should avoid fornication (I Thess. 4:3-7) and cut himself off from

anything that leads to it (Matt. 5:27-30). Marriage is to be for life (Matt. 19:6), and the only honorable end to a marriage is either by death or divorce for the cause of fornication when a mate is guilty of such (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). If a body (church) does not teach and insist on these matters as the Head directs, it is not connected to the Head.

The spiritual mission of the Head (Jesus) is seen throughout His life. He came to seek and save those who were lost (Lk. 19:10). While on occasion He fed thousands by miracle, the purpose of such was to establish faith in their hearts that He was the Messiah (Jno. 20:30-31). When people followed Him for food, He disappointed them by refusing to provide for their physical desires. His mission was to feed the spirits not the stomachs (read all of John 6). Likewise, His body (church) has a spiritual mission. It is to support the truth preached (I Tim. 3:14-15) since it is truth that saves people (Jno. 8:32; I Pet. 1:22). It is to edify itself through further teaching of the Scripture (Eph. 4:11-16; I Cor. 14:5, 26). Whenever the body has members who need physical assistance, families and other members are to help (I Tim. 5:3-16; Acts 11:27-30). However, if a body (church) provides social meals, recreation, builds and maintains “fellowship (?) halls,” family life centers and other social programs for the fun and frolic of its members, it has disconnected itself from the Head. The Head never gave directions for such, and consequently these activities are without authority from the Head.

While the church is Christ’s body of penitent, baptized believers seeking to do His will, the church does not save. God, Christ, and the gospel save, and each person who is saved is added to His church (Acts 2:47).

Further, the church will not judge each person. God will judge each individual by Christ (Acts 17:30-31), and the standard of judgment will be the gospel of Christ (Rom. 2:16; Rev. 20:12). Some think if the church of which they are members endorses a practice, such activity must be right. That makes the church the head rather than Christ. The church has no authority to legislate spiritual law; the Head has already spoken. The church has no authority, but its Head, Jesus Christ, has all authority (Matt. 28:18).

Is your life directed by the “Head,” Jesus Christ? Does your life reflect His will, and are you an active, functioning member of the Head’s body, His church? If not, you need to be for the eternal well being of your soul. We will be happy to help any way we can. — *Phillip Owens*

People Do Change

By Gardner Hall

But they don’t usually change churches. They change from one make of automobile to another. They change their place of residence. Many change husbands and wives. Many change jobs. But there seems to be a kind of stigma against changing churches. One lady told me apologetically that she was thinking of visiting our services. She had an idea I would think it strange if she visited.

People will readily change WITH churches—that is, if they are becoming more liberal. They don’t change so readily WITH a church if its change is toward conservatism or more strict adherence to the Scriptures. People are ten times more afraid of being out of step with the crowds than of being out of step with Christ. The one thing that should cause dissatisfaction with a church is its departure from the Scriptures. The best reason for making a change is to be with a church that studies the Scriptures and strives in all of its studies the Scriptures and strives in all of its phases to follow them. A church should be scriptural in name, doctrine, government, worship and work. Jesus convinced some people who would not change (Jno. 12:42-43)

The Elgin Hills Examiner

*“...examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so”
(Acts 17:11)*

Volume 1

October – November, 2006

Nos. 10-11

Do I have any responsibilities to a local church?

Yes! When one obeys the gospel through faith, repentance and baptism (Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38), he becomes a Christian and a member of the Lord’s universal church made up of every saved individual who has lived (Heb. 12:23 – “the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven”). This is also the “one body” (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4). However, about all we are commanded to do toward this “brotherhood” is “love” it (I Pet. 2:17). There is no organization to this church, except Jesus Christ is “head” (Eph. 1:22-23) and all Christians make up His “body” (I Cor. 12:20).

The local church is a different matter. People often deny what is plainly affirmed in Scripture by thinking they can be saved without belonging to *any* “organized religion.” “There are hypocrites in all the churches” is another hackneyed phrase. What is the truth?

Three years after Paul’s conversion he went to Jerusalem and attempted to “join himself to the disciples” (Acts 9:26). One should not wonder *why* when one learns what Christians are to do within local churches.

Individual Christians are to eat the Lord’s supper on the first day of the week “***when you assemble yourselves together***” (I Cor. 11:20). The universal church can’t do this, but local churches were commanded to do so and did. Paul practiced what he preached (see Acts 20:5-11) and provides an apostolic example for us to follow.

Individual Christians are to speak “one to another” which involves others in our singing (Eph. 5:19; I Cor. 14:15). While we can worship God privately in song (see James 5:13), these other passages obviously show we have local congregational responsibilities in this area.

Individual Christians are to give into a common treasury on the first day of the week (I Cor. 16:2) both for evangelistic (Phil. 4:15-16; II Cor. 11:8-9) as well as benevolent purposes (I Cor. 16:1-4; II Cor. 8-9; I Tim. 5:16). On an individual basis, Christians are to help those less fortunate as ability and opportunity arise (Eph. 4:28; Rom. 12:8; Matt. 25:34-40). Many works in which local congregations engage themselves (and I speak of Scripturally authorized works) require financial backing. A meeting house rented or owned, utility bills, maintenance, song books, elements for the Lord’s supper, and other authorized works of the church require money. If *everyone* had the attitude of some who believe they have no responsibilities to any one local work, it would be impossible to either plan or carry out the work of that local congregation.

Individual Christians are to “consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,” and much of this is done before, during and after we assemble (Heb. 10:24-25), which

assembling together Paul says in context we are not to forsake! When people “float” from one congregation to another, how can they “*consider* (“take careful note of each other’s spiritual welfare,” *Vincent’s Word Studies*) one another” well enough to stimulate them in spiritual matters? This obviously implies a responsibility to the local church.

Elders are to “tend the flock which is among” them. The “universal” church has no elders, but local churches do (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5). Elders must *know* who is among the flock they are commanded to oversee, and sheep are to “know them that...are over” them “in the Lord,...and esteem them exceeding highly” (I Thess. 5:12-13). It should go without saying (but because of misunderstandings we are happy to say it) that the above commandments demand a close, working relation between elders and members of the church they oversee. Since elders are responsible for watching “in behalf of your souls” (Heb. 13:17), they must know those for whom they are responsible. Common sense would seem to dictate some definite “membership list” for local congregations. Members “floating” from one church to another and never “placing membership” obstructs the very good that God designed in this element of local church government.

It is evident that communication existed between congregations as to who were considered faithful Christians (read Acts 18:27; Rom. 16:1-2; I Cor. 16:3; II Cor. 3:1). Again, this demands that one be considered a member of some congregation and known well enough to be “commended.”

Paul pictured the church as a body having individual parts (Christians) or joints supplying different needs, but all “fitly framed and knit together” to cause the “growth of the body” (Eph. 4:16). Therefore, individual Christians are to provide what they are able to provide for the growth and encouragement of others, and they in turn are helped (in different ways) by others. From a practical point, this can only be done through the closeness God intended to characterize local churches of Christ.

Let us keep in mind an eternal principle God stated through Moses – “And Jehovah commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear Jehovah our God, *for our good always*” (Deut. 6:24). The responsibilities we have as members of local congregations are “for our good always.”

The Elgin Hills church of Christ seeks to practice New Testament Christianity, and we encourage you to do the same. We would like for you to visit with us at the times of worship mentioned on the back of this paper, and if you wish, we will be happy to come to your home to discuss spiritual matters. Let us know if we can help. -- *Phillip Owens*

What About Drunkenness & Social Drinking?

Those who keep statistics tell us that drinking alcohol is the number one “drug” problem in our country, especially among young people. In spite of deaths, broken homes, lost jobs, and physical illnesses due to drinking alcohol, people still drink. Furthermore, many attempt to justify drinking from the Scriptures. What is the truth on the matter?

First, the Greek word for wine (*oinos*), is a general word that does not necessarily imply an alcoholic drink. “Wine” describes the juice from the grape, and it may or may not be alcoholic. That is determined by the context. While there are obvious cases where wine is described as an alcoholic drink (due to its effects), sometimes it describes what we call grape juice. There is ***more*** evidence that the wine Jesus changed water into was grape juice than an

alcoholic type (John 2:1-11), and this is one of the few passages some people think could possibly justify drinking alcohol!

Second, Bible “wines” were not of the high alcoholic content characteristic of our wines today because people of that day did not have distillation processes capable of producing such. Therefore, even wines described in the Scripture that were fermented were much lower in alcoholic content. It is therefore a false parallel to compare wines of our day to even the fermented wines of the first century.

Third, while some Bible believers who desire to drink alcohol admit that the Bible condemns drunkenness (see I Corinthians 6:10; Galatians 5:21 and others), they believe that social drinking or a beer now and then does not violate Divine law. However, the Bible condemns various stages of drinking intoxicating beverages from drunkenness (to the point of staggering or passing out) to what would amount to a cocktail party, or social drinking. I Peter 4:3 says, “For we *have spent* enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, *drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties*, and abominable idolatries” (New King James Version). “Drinking parties” is translated “*banquetings*” in the King James Version.

In his book, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, Richard Trench says of the word translated “*banquetings*,” “the drinking bout, the banquet, the symposium (a drinking together), not of necessity excessive,...but giving opportunity for excess” (p. 225).

Did you notice the above, “not of necessity excessive,...but giving opportunity for excess”? This certainly describes the “happy hour,” cocktail parties, social drinking, and “a friendly glass of beer”! When it comes to drinking alcoholic beverages, let us have this attitude, “Avoid it, pass not by it; Turn from it, and pass on” (Prov. 4:15).

—Phillip Owens

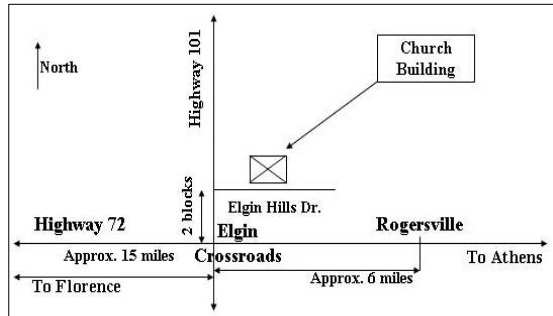
Radio Spots

Note: We have four one-minute spots per week (Monday – Thursday) during afternoon “drive time” over WLAY 103.5 FM out of Tuscumbia. A number of our readers are not in the listening area of WLAY. Following are two of our recent one-minute “spots.”

Jesus gave two parables in Matthew 13, both of which teach the great value of the kingdom of heaven, or the church of Jesus Christ. The difference in the parables is how one finds the kingdom. In the first, a man finds a treasure in a field, and seeing its great value, sells all he has to buy the field in which the treasure was found. He finds it by *accident*, so to speak. Similarly, you may be listening to my voice by chance, and something we say sparks your interest in what is the most valuable thing you can possess – the salvation of your soul — and as a result you decide to obey the gospel and are added to the church, the kingdom of heaven. In the second parable, a merchant who seeks goodly pearls eventually finds one pearl of great price for which he has been looking, and, similar to the first, in his joy, he sells all he has and buys that pearl. Some read their Bibles searching for the truth of the gospel and the church one reads about in the New Testament. Perhaps this could lead you to the truth for which you have been searching. Call the Elgin Hills church of Christ at 247-1797 for more information. -- *p.a.o.*

Because some want to avoid hell, they feel compelled to claim some allegiance to Jesus. However, many still do whatever *they* want rather than what Jesus wants. Immorality, multiple marriages, cursing, drinking, lying and deceit are still a part of the character of some who claim to follow Jesus. *Jesus died* to save us from our past sins and we are forgiven when we obey His

gospel. However, **Jesus lived** to give us a righteous pattern to follow (I Pet. 2:21). In other words, Jesus is not just interested in saving us from our past; He is also interested in our growing to become like he is in character (Col. 3:10). In fact, if we don't and still believe we can go to heaven, we only fool ourselves. I'm Phillip Owens with the Elgin Hills church of Christ. We are not sinless, but we believe Jesus was and that He intends for us to follow His example. We meet Sundays at 9 & 4, Wednesdays at 7, and are located two blocks north of Elgin Crossroads. Visit with us and visit our web site at elginhillschurchofchrist.org. -- p.a.o.



A cordial welcome awaits you at the services of the
Elgin Hills Church Of Christ
Sunday **9:00 a.m. Bible Classes**
 10:00 a.m. Worship
 4:00 p.m. Worship
Wednesday **7:00 p.m. Bible Classes**
Phone: (256) 247-1797 (building)
Editor: Phillip Owens
Email: phillipowens@charter.net
Visit us on the web at elginhillschurchofchrist.org

*The Elgin Hills
Examiner*

"...examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so"
(Acts 17:11)



Vol. 1

December, 2006

No. 12

81 Elgin Hills Dr., Rogersville, AL 35652

*What is more important in
Worship: What pleases me or what
pleases God?*

**Plan now to attend 2 special gospel
efforts with the**

***Elgin Hills
Church Of Christ***

1) 5th Sunday Singing

Sunday afternoon, December 31

3:00 p.m.

Evening Service follows at 4:00

*"Speaking to one another in psalms and
hymns and spiritual songs, singing and
making melody in your heart to the Lord"*
(Eph. 5:19)

**What better way could one finish '06 than
by worshipping and giving praise to God in
song on His day (Rev. 1:10)?**

2) Special Study

Saturday Night, January 6

6:00 p.m.

***"Once Saved, Always Saved:
Is it true Bible Teaching?"***

Pat Donahue, speaking

Questions welcomed!

– Please announce where you worship –

When encouraging a young man recently to allow me 45 minutes to go through the whole gospel story, he replied, "I'm happy where we are – I like the music." The church he mentioned had a loud band and "was a lot of fun."

A worship assembly does not have to be drab to be Scriptural. David said, "I was *glad* when they said unto me, let us go unto the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1), and that should reflect our sentiments. If it doesn't, do we really know the God and Christ of the Bible? Is our relationship with God what is reflected in the New Testament? The fact that Jesus Christ is in our midst (Matt. 18:20) and the fact that we have opportunity to praise the Sovereign Lord of all the universe should provide much happiness and joy in our worship.

The very nature of worship is not fun and games. God stated that every area or act of worship in assemblies should be regulated by at least two Divine principles: "Let all things be done unto edifying" and "let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:26, 40). Rather than make a "show" of miraculous gifts during the first century when some inspired people *really* had them, Paul said that everything done was calculated to provide understanding, edification, and exhortation (14:3, 5, 9 & others). Men with spiritual gifts were only to use them in a way that the church might be instructed in the gospel. Knowledge and instruction of God's will trumped any other consideration such as a "show" of spiritual gifts. After all, entertainment is directed toward me and what I like; worship is directed toward God and what He wants!

It is possible for churches to assemble "not for the better but for the worse." As strange as this may seem to our "politically correct" society, what some at Corinth considered worship was actually eating and drinking *damnation* to themselves according to the apostle Paul (I Cor. 11:17-29). Paul said the way they were eating the

Lord's supper was the wrong way. They were "coming together not for the better but for the worse." If there was a wrong way to eat the Lord's supper, then there is a right way to eat it. People were losing their souls because of this error. Many churches today are not interested in duplicating New Testament Christianity but rather in drawing and holding crowds by entertainment. They would earn the same rebuke Paul gave the Corinthians.

God has always looked with great displeasure on anyone who treats worship to Him in a fast and loose manner. Cain likely felt "happy" about his produce offering to the Lord, but it was not "by faith" which comes by hearing what God says in His word (Rom. 10:17). Abel's offering *was* by faith (Gen. 4:1-8; Heb. 11:4). He did what God said. John called Cain's worship *evil* works, and Abel's *righteous* (read I John 3:12). I have heard some say, "worship is always right, and there's no wrong way to do it." Actually, nothing could be further from the truth.

While God did not always strike dead those who tampered with His appointed ways to worship, He did so on some occasions to make a much needed point and lasting impression (see Leviticus 10:1-2; II Chronicles 26:16-21)!

The very nature of worship is God-ward; entertainment is man-ward. Worship must come from one's contemplation of his own unworthiness and God's greatness; it is soul probing and God adoring; thus it comes from one's inside and proceeds upward. It is also regulated by Divine authority revealed in the New Testament.

For those who are "turned on" by loud music, hand clapping, and other eye and ear catching crowd attractions, the simplicity of a few moments of "silence" surrounding the Lord's supper are a "turn off." For the spiritually minded however, it is a time of deep reflection on one's sin and unworthiness. It is a time to contemplate the cost required to redeem one from sin. It is a time to rededicate oneself to keeping the New Covenant which was ratified by Jesus' blood and is memorialized by the fruit of the vine. These activities are spiritual in nature and are true worship!

Bands with a loud "beat," hand clapping, and other stimulants appeal to the physical senses – they make us "feel" good by operating on our outward senses (sight, hearing, etc.). However, attention is on *them* not God. "Performances" and "concerts" (as they are advertised) do not describe worship to God but entertainment for people.

What is the lesson? Concerning worship, there should never be a question. What pleases God as revealed in the New Testament takes precedence over every consideration. My ideas, notions, or likes should not. God will reward them that "*diligently seek him*" (Heb. 11:6), not those who seek God on their own terms. – *p.a.o.*

Singing and Clapping

Ever so slightly one senses tension developing between the older and younger generations of disciples today. The older generation insists that the way we serve God is "biblical" and the upcoming generation contends that we are bound by human "traditions." The tension will only rise unless there is agreement on how to establish Scriptural authority for our work and worship. When one asks of issues "Where is the authority?" and the other asks "What's wrong with it?" the potential for division looms.

A case in point is the new but very limited practice of clapping while singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs in praise of God and edification of one another. I have expressed my doubts about the Scripturalness of this practice and have been asked: "What's wrong with it?" Coming from the older generation, my reaction is: "Where does the New Testament authorize it?" Under what Biblical command, example, or necessary inference is this practice taught in the new covenant? That's the question!

The word "clapping" is used only in the Old Testament and conveys the idea of "rejoicing" – whether celebrating the demise of an enemy or expressing joy when singing to the Lord. As I

understand the younger generation, there is nothing wrong with it today because it expresses one's joy in the Lord. "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice" is, I assume, from my perspective, the authority that is offered for this practice (Phil. 4:4). It is inherent in the word "rejoice," it is argued. If I understand the point, the next generation is affirming that since "clapping" was joined with "singing" in praising the Lord under the Old Testament, the two by inference can be tied together under the new covenant.

My question, first of all, would be: Does this hold true with the tambourines and dancing that accompanied the singing of Miriam after Israel passed through the Red Sea? Is not dancing and banging on a tambourine off one's leg an expression of "joy" in the Lord? What about stamping one's feet (Ezk. 25:6)? And, was not the use of mechanical instruments of music added to singing as an expression of joy in the Lord? I fearfully ask these questions, knowing that in the hearts of many young disciples they are saying "Yes" to all of them!

Hezekiah and Ezra when they restored the worship of Israel introduced the "instruments of David" – and rightly so (2 Chron. 29:26; Neh. 12:36)! But when the Messiah came, He offered to His disciples worship "in spirit and truth." Later the apostles taught brethren to "sing" and "make melody" in their hearts to the Lord. We have asked for generations, what in that teaching authorizes the noise of rhythmic clapping or banging of tambourines? What about foot stamping (Ezk. 25:6)? Do these practices teach? Do they edify? Do they utter words of praise to God as the fruit of our lips (Heb. 13:15)?

Worship in spirit denotes "spiritual," heartfelt, soul-filled honor and praise to God. We fail to see any of this in the above methods. We further believe that clapping opens up worship to raucous, fleshly, sensual expressions of joy – much as a celebration at a sporting event or as the mechanical praise of banjos, guitars, drums, and other such instruments. That could be, brethren, why Jesus and the apostles are silent on these things.
– L. A. Stauffer

Horrors

There is considerable attention focused upon the protesters to nuclear energy by the media. Personally, I believe most of their fears are unfounded. I have a few questions every American would do well to consider on this subject.

What if 40-50 people were killed every day by malfunctioning power plants?

What if the malfunctioning plants seriously injured 1500 others every day?

What if the presence of these plants drove 8-20 people to commit suicide every day?

What if the product produced by the plants cause 200 broken homes every day?

What if it caused 250 people to suffer permanent brain damage every day, besides the other injuries already described?

What if it cause 125 parents to abuse their children or to assault other loved ones every day?

What if it caused 5-6 billion dollars direct damage, and inestimable indirect damage every year?

Now, if you will just double every figure I have quoted, you will have a partial picture of the effects of beverage alcohol! Where are the protesters???

Dub McClish

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