

The Elgin Hills
Examiner

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

Vol. 2

January, 2007

No. 1



81 Elgin Hills Dr., Rogersville, AL 35652

**Plan to attend our
Special Saturday night study
with the**

***Elgin Hills
Church Of Christ***

6:00 p.m., February 3, 2007

Topic:

***“Is Homosexuality consistent
with Biblical Christianity?”***

Pat Donahue, speaking

Questions will be welcomed!

**– Please support with your presence,
tell others, and announce where you
worship.**

**The study will deal with and answer such
questions as:**

1. Are homosexuals born to be such?
2. If one is a homosexual, can he change?
3. Does Jesus condemn homosexuality?
4. Can a homosexual be saved without quitting the practice?

**“Fellowship: A Social
Activity?”**

by Mark Roberts

What is the church’s responsibility in arranging social and recreational activities for its members? This is an important question, that becomes even more pressing as more and more churches turn to the “fun and games gospel” to raise interest and draw crowds. Diametrically opposing positions have been taken on this matter. Some affirm that a church can support, coordinate, provide for and pay for nearly any social activity because such represents an opportunity for fellowship. Others have argued that social and recreational activities have no place in the work of the New Testament church. What is right? What does the Bible say?

Let us begin by understanding what the issue is not. The question is not may the preacher eat his lunch in his office, is it scriptural to maintain a drinking fountain (with chilled water!), or can the men who come on a Saturday work day eat their lunches in the foyer or a classroom. These are incidental matters, and represent incidental uses of the building. These activities occur in conjunction with and (please note) are subordinate to the main reason folks have come to the building: to be about scriptural, authorized kingdom business. No one comes to this church building to drink water! These kinds of activities are no more parallel to the

building and maintaining of social halls then having a first aid kit in the cry room is parallel to the church building and supporting a hospital.

The issue is “Are social and recreational activities true fellowship activities as found in the New Testament?” Please understand that many would answer “yes.” In an article from a bulletin of a local church of Christ one writes:

“We are told to have fellowship of the righteous (Psalm 55:14; John 13:34; Romans 15:1). This coming Sunday evening after services we are all encouraged to have fellowship of the righteous. Bring your freezer of ice cream and join us on the back parking lot. It is a wonderful opportunity for the whole congregation to fellowship together. I hope to see each of you there.”

Yet a search of the New Testament yields a different viewpoint entirely. The term “fellowship” in the New Testament is used to mean “share together, or participate together.” It is never used in the New Testament to refer to social activities, dinners, or entertainment. In the New Testament the word is always used to mean sharing together in spiritual activities. “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have *fellowship* with us; and truly our *fellowship* is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). This passage is wonderfully instructive because it shows how fellowship cannot mean social activity. Fellowship is a spiritual activity, participating together in spiritual actions with spiritual goals and spiritual ends in mind. We challenge anyone to produce a single verse of scripture where a meal or social activity is referred to in scripture as “fellowship.” A careful search of the New Testament will find

that the only “meal” labeled fellowship is the Lord’s Supper (“is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?”). When brethren tried to make that into a social occasion they were sternly rebuked and told to take their parties home (see 1 Cor. 11:34)!

Only by redefining the biblical word “fellowship” to mean partying, banquets and fun can one arrive at the place where he or she has Bible authority for his practice. But by such reasoning we must allow sprinkling and pouring as means of baptism, because today’s dictionaries so define baptism. We will take today’s definition of baptism, read it back into the Bible, and presto – Philip sprinkled the Ethiopian eunuch! If brethren cry “Foul!” at such a misuse of scripture do we not rightly point out the very same error when some take today’s use of “fellowship” (meaning fun and games) and then read it back into the Bible to justify the church sponsoring parties of every kind?

The truth of the matter is that the New Testament shows the church’s collective work to be preaching the gospel, edifying the saints and relieving needy Christians. Examples and commands for these works abound in the New Testament, yet nothing is said in any place of ice cream socials, parties, baby showers, potluck suppers or other purely social activities that now go on in many churches of Christ. Where is the Bible authority for these activities? We see clearly that these events are not fellowship, so what are they? Frankly put, they are unauthorized and unscriptural additions to the Lord’s work (see 2 John 9). Every dime spent on fun and games simply is one dime loss to do the God-given, God-authorized work the church must be about. For those who would justify the church sponsoring social and recreational

activities as fellowship we would pose the following question:

Is attending such events mandatory?

Surely none would say that fellowship is optional in the Lord's church. Note Paul's command: "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." The Philippian brethren were obligated to be about spiritual matters, to partake and share together in spiritual activities. Many have understood the principle from Hebrews 10:25 that assembling and worshiping together is a spiritual activity and that all Christians are indeed obligated to participate in that activity. Would any argue that potluck suppers and other such social meals are obligations that no Christian should shirk? To sharpen the point, would anyone say that a brother or sister sins by not attending a "fellowship meal" in the "fellowship hall"? This and this alone reveals that these activities are not in the same class as spiritual endeavors (true New Testament fellowship) to which Christians are obligated to be a part of.

Secondly, we note that there are many churches of Christ that are very comfortable with a fellowship hall and occasional social get togethers sponsored from the treasury but adamantly oppose the church constructing gymnasiums and "Family Life Centers." Could we kindly ask what is the difference in principle between the church constructing and maintaining a room purely for social activities and the church constructing a bigger and more elaborate room (or rooms) for pure social activities? If eating together (a social activity) is Bible fellowship why can't playing basketball be classified as Bible fellowship too? If it is

right for the church to sponsor social activities because they are fellowship, please tell what social activity the church cannot sponsor as fellowship and why? What makes an ice cream social in the back parking lot fellowship while playing softball isn't? The truth is that neither constitutes a correct use of the Bible term "fellowship" and thus neither one is fellowship. Therefore, neither eating together or playing ball is part of the church's work.

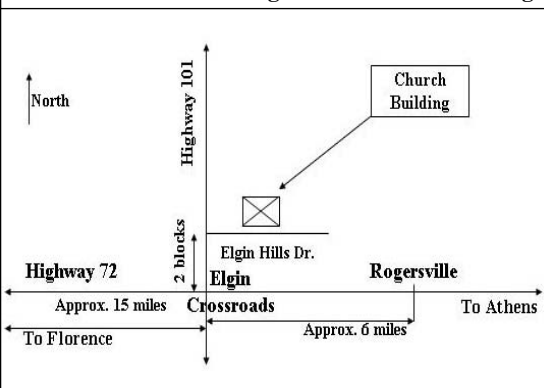
It is of interest that some who have protested the loudest about "liberalism" among brethren when various big churches of Christ have constructed multi-million dollar gymnasiums and places to play have fellowship halls at their own meeting houses. Such inconsistency is evident to all. Some want the church to be involved in only a little error, just a little digression. If apostasy comes along in a big way with a big price tag they renounce it furiously, while protecting their own small apostasy. But where did the idea of bigger and grander social and recreational activities come from? Is it not so that a generation was taught that fellowship meant Christians having fun together, and so "anything goes?" Wasn't that lesson taught by those who re-labeled their parties and potlucks "fellowship?"

For too long brethren have been divided over something that no one believes is mandatory in Christ's kingdom: social activities. Why should this be, when Christ prayed for unity (see John 17:21)? There is no authority for the church to be involved in recreational and social activities. Such do not constitute true New Testament fellowship. Hence, we call on brethren to leave off these unauthorized practices that we might truly participate together in spiritual things to the building up of the kingdom of Christ.

“What must I do to be saved?” is a question answered several times in the New Testament. Inspired men answered it depending on where listeners were in their understanding. Remember, Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach *faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of past sins* in Matt. 28:18-20, Mk. 16:15-16, & Luke 24:46-47. Therefore, inspired men took people where they were in their understanding, and began to answer their question from that point. To the Philippian jailor who *knew nothing of Jesus*, Paul answered, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus*, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). He subsequently washed Paul’s wounds indicating his repentance, and was baptized after hearing the gospel. To Jews who *already believed*, Peter answered, *repent and be baptized* (Acts 2:36-38). To Saul of Tarsus who already believed and repented, Ananias answered, “*arise & be baptized & wash away thy sins*” (Acts 22:16). Contact the Elgin Hills church of Christ if we can help you do what these did.

-- Phillip Owens

A cordial welcome awaits you at the services of the
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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
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A Godly View of Sin

“Whatever happened to sin?” This question, occasionally asked these days, can be answered with another question: “Whatever happened to God?” When people lose sight of God, sin cannot be far behind.

The World’s View Of Sin. Worldly people usually have in mind some vague definition of sin. In their view murder is sin because it hurts other people. If you asked the average person to name a sinner, he might well name Saddam Hussein; look how many people he has hurt! On the other hand, a psychology professor I knew insisted that sexual relations between two unmarried consenting adults is no more than a handshake if no one gets hurt.

Some take another step to call things sin if they hurt the one who does them. These days some people think of smoking as sinful because it harms the body. At the same time, drunkenness is winked at as long as one does not harm himself or drive under the influence.

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Topic:

***“Does it matter what you are
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questions as:**

Things may be thought sinful once they become socially unacceptable; speaking against homosexuality is just about the most heinous sin some people can imagine. Illegal things are considered sinful if one is caught and, if not, they become clever. And, of course, anything that makes you feel bad about yourself is probably a sin for you.

Notice that all of these involve horizontal relationships. Sin is defined in purely human terms. The only authority acknowledged is human authority. The guilt or innocence of any action is judged by its visible and foreseeable effect on people here and now. God is not in the picture.

The Godly View. As godliness is defined, however, everything is judged in reference to God. The word *sin*, as used in the Bible, is “missing the mark.” Crime is missing the mark set by men: sin is missing the mark set by God (1 Jno. 3:4). Murder is sin, not because it is illegal or because it hurts someone but because God has forbidden it. The mark God has set may be missed by going beyond it (1 Jno. 5:17; 2 Jno. 9) or by coming short of it (Jas. 4:17; Rom. 3:23).

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The act by which “sin entered into the world” (Rom. 5:12) was an act that few people in our godless age would call sin. In fact, I am asked sometimes, “What do you think that Adam and Eve *really* did?” Well, what they *really* did was eat a piece of fruit (Gen. 3:6), and it was sin because God had forbidden it. Whether men see anything wrong in their action is beside the point.

When God told Abraham to offer his son on an altar (Gen. 22:2), he would have sinned if he had failed to obey. His faith was demonstrated in his willingness to do what God said, regardless of his own human sense of right and wrong.

Fornication, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, covetousness, drunkenness, and extortion were socially acceptable in Corinth, but the Holy Spirit through Paul insisted that those practicing such things would not “inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9,10). “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 5:6).

Even worship can be sin if it is not what God desires (Matt. 7:21-23), and a failure to worship is also sin (Jas. 4:17).

God and Sin. Once God is brought into the picture it becomes clear that sin is man’s greatest problem. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...” (Rom. 1:18). What man on his own can escape the wrath of God? Since sin is an offense against God, only God can forgive it. And forgiving sin is not easy even for God. It cost Him the life of His Son.

The just penalty attached to sin by a just God is death; consequently, justice demands that the penalty be paid if sins are to be forgiven. If the sinner paid it he would be forever separated from God. But “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jno. 3:16). He allowed His Son to be “cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of My people, to whom the stroke was due” (Isa. 53:8).

Whenever we are tempted to sin, even in ways that the world considers innocent, we should ask with Joseph, “How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9) And when even the world pronounces us guilty, we still must confess to God along with David, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight...” (Psa. 51:4). -
- *Sewell Hall*

**Contact us for any help concerning
spiritual matters.**

Do you believe in the God of the Bible?
There *are* evidences. Would you like to study them? Contact us for free Bible correspondence courses or personal studies.

Legalism: The Un-Sin by *Steve Klein*

Since the church began, the devil has concocted any number of diabolical schemes to ensnare God’s people. One of his most successful gambits has been the invention of the pseudo-sin commonly called legalism. More people consider legalism to be a sin than consider 7-UP to be a cola, but they are all mistaken. Legalism is the UN-SIN.

Legalism is defined as “strict, literal or excessive conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code” (Webster’s Dictionary). Simply put, a legalist follows the rules.

I was not there when the devil and his angels dreamed up this strategy for getting Christians to commit more sin by convincing them that legalism is a sin. But I must say that it was a stroke of genius. Just think of it – being able to actually convince people that not committing sin is a sin!

Satan must have noticed that early disciples “continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine” (Acts 2:42), and that they were expected to be “obedient in all things” (2 Corinthians 2:9). At some point however, Satan also became aware that the apostles and prophets of Christ were teaching Jewish Christians that they could not rely on their obedience to the Law of Moses for their salvation; it would do them no good to strictly follow the Law of Moses. And that’s when Satan hatched his scheme. He knew that if he could convince Christians that the apostolic warnings against becoming “entangled again with a yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1) were talking about strictly keeping the commands of Jesus, then he could get them to stop being concerned with commandment keeping.

This is what has happened. Millions of people today who call themselves Christians believe that strict obedience to God is a sin called legalism. They believe that to be a faithful Christian one must not be too concerned with actually doing exactly what Jesus said to do. Their leaders write things like the following:

“Stringently striving to obey Christian rules and regulations doesn't enable the Spirit-filled walk; it often kills it” (2 Corinthians 3:6). [Neil Anderson, *Freed From Legalism*].

Please note that in the verse cited by this anti-legalist, the apostle Paul states that God “made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” What is “the letter” in this passage? Is it “Christian rules and regulations” as Mr. Anderson states? We don’t have to guess, for Paul tells us in the next verse. The letter that kills is called “the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones” (2 Corinthians 2:7). “The letter” is plainly the Law of Moses! It was written on tablets of stone.

Over and over again the apostles of Christ warn that striving to strictly follow the Law of Moses will lead to death, not life! But NOWHERE do they state that strictly following the commands of Christ will do the same. The New Testament never condemns the strict keeping of the commandments of God. It always commends it. Even the hair-splitting, herb-tithing, commandment-keeping Pharisees were not condemned for keeping God’s commandments too well. They were condemned for keeping the small requirements while leaving off the big ones. Jesus told them that they should have kept BOTH! “These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23).

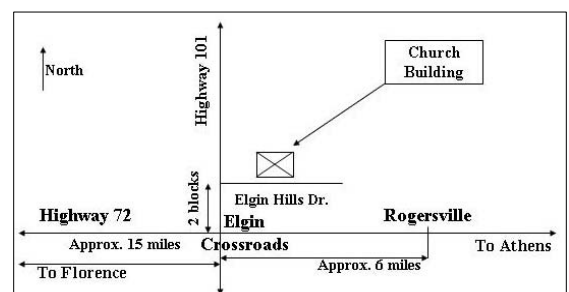
My friends, those who love God will keep His commandments. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). Those who don’t keep God’s commandments, don’t really know Him. “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4).

Pharisees & Religious Division Today

The Pharisees of Jesus’ day were religiously right about some things but wrong about others. Their “Bible” was the Old Testament *plus* traditions they believed had been orally handed down by Moses and the prophets, and it was over these traditions that Jesus and the Pharisees often crossed swords. Pharisees put traditions on a par with the Scripture, and Jesus accused them of making void the word of God by them (Mk. 7:8-13). There is really no difference in principle between Jewish denominations of the 1st Century holding partly to the Old Law plus their traditions, and denominations today holding partly to the Bible plus their

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disciplines. Unless everyone accepts the authority of Jesus Christ and His apostles in the New Testament and it alone, people can be religious, but religiously divided and wrong. Only when we respect the authority of Christ can there be unity. *– Phillip Owens*

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March-April, 2007

Nos. 3-4

Do we hate sin or play with it?

Parents who truly love a newborn child hate and avoid anything which harms that child. Environments of disease and sickness are avoided. People who have contagious diseases are not welcomed guests. This is as it should be, and most understand this is for the good of the child.

That same hatred for anything that harms physically should also apply to anything that harms spiritually—sin. David said, "Through thy precepts I get understanding; Therefore I *hate* every false way" (Ps. 119:104). A similar statement later is, "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; And I *hate every false way*" (vs. 128).

Moses anticipated Israel's entrance into Canaan's idolatrous culture and warned, "The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire. Do not covet the silver and gold on them, and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it is *detestable* to the Lord your God. Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. *Utterly abhor and detest it*, for it is set apart for destruction" (Deut. 7:25-26). Abhor and detest are good synonyms for hate, and such was to be Israel's feelings toward the idolatrous trappings of Canaan.

However, Israel's toying (dealing with something lightly or without vigor or purpose) with idolatry later led Joshua to say that Israel could not "serve Jehovah" as long as these remained (Josh. 24:19). He was right. Following his death, Israel "forsook Jehovah, and served Baal and the Ashtaroth" (Judges 2:13). This led to a downward spiral ending eventually in their destruction as a nation.

Christians should not only do right, they should not do anything that looks wrong (II Cor. 8:20-21; Rom. 12:17).

Lest anyone think that God has "softened" His Old Testament view of sin, Jesus Himself said, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be *better* for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:6). It is difficult to imagine how execution by *drowning* at sea is "better" than anything. However, Jesus said that such was "better" because one who leads another to sin has the ultimate destiny of hell that is much "worse"!

Paul told Ephesian Christians, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking," since God's wrath will come on such (Eph. 5:3-6, NIV). Clearly, Christians are to abhor and detest sins common to our society to the degree that there is not "even a hint" of them around us. Love for God and a desire to go to heaven should form a hatred for sin and avoidance of everything that would lead one to hell.

Since this is true...

1. Never intentionally sin even once. One's conscience can become "seared" (I Tim. 4:2) and insensitive to the terribleness of it. Something by which one was "bothered" earlier becomes, as lying does, a little easier every time it's done. Sin is "deceitful" (Heb. 3:13). It promises what it can not fulfill, costs more than expected, and will keep one longer than intended. No wonder Paul said to "exhort one another daily...so that none of you may be *hardened* by sin's deceitfulness." Once you deliberately violate your conscience and intentionally sin, the road to hell becomes easier.

2. Hate sin enough that even if doing right, nothing will *appear to be wrong*. The influence of sin is so terrible that we should not only do right, but also do nothing that *looks* wrong! Paul knew questions might arise concerning any misallocation of the monetary gift Gentile churches were collecting for Jerusalem saints. To avoid raising any questions of impropriety, Paul had several men accompany him and the gift. "We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, *not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men*" (II Cor. 8:20-21). *Perception of wrong even to the world* should be a concern to Christians.

I have known faithful brethren who would never be alone in a house with another woman who was not his wife or relative. This illustrates the principle above. However, some have never been taught or have forgotten this principle. In last month's *Truth Magazine*, Connie Adams had this to say even about preachers misbehaving.

"And what shall we say about purity toward the sisters? The cause of Christ suffers from those who preach the truth about purity while living immorally. Out of "counseling" sessions in the preacher's study affairs have developed, flirtations have matured into inflamed passion, marriage vows have been violated, and then a trail of lies invented to cover such betrayals of trust. When these come to light, families are shattered, children bewildered, confidence is lost, the weak are made to stumble, and only the judgment will reveal the number of lost souls in the wake of such deeds."

If I had a car problem, needed help, and a bar were close by, and other help a half-mile or so away, I would walk! Even if one didn't drink in the bar, his appearance going into, time spent inside, and coming out would give anyone who saw him justifiable questions. Someone may say, "That's judging." Yes, but why do people go to bars? Not to make calls but to drink liquor. Your presence, even if you were doing right, leads to wrong assumptions. Influence is important, especially on the world (see Matthew 5:13-16), and we are to live so as to influence everyone to live righteously, not ungodly lives. We are to "be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody" (Rom. 12:17), and "give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God" (I Cor. 10:32). It's sinful to drink (I Pet. 4:3). It is likewise wrong to sit around socializing at a place where such is done. One should not only not drink, but also never give anyone a reason to believe that he does.

We are to "flee fornication" (I Cor. 6:18), which means avoid putting ourselves in a position where fornication is easy, such as when an unmarried and eligible man and woman live together and alone in a house. Christians should live so as not only to avoid fornication, but also *avoid appearing to others* that such occurs.

Loving and hating anything generally comes by learning more about that thing; why it is lovable or detestable. The more we know of God's character, His word, the more we will view sin from His point of view, and the more we will grow to hate it, not flirt with it. God's will found in His word defines what sin is (I Jno. 3:4), and is our shield against it. "Thy word have I laid up in my heart, That I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11). Let us hate sin and not play with it, and love righteousness and be serious about it.

-- Phillip Owens

Mary and Martha

Someone has observed that we live under a “tyranny of oughts.” That is, we are continually under pressure to do all the things we “ought” to do. For example, we ought to do our best at work, take time for our husband or wife, take an interest in our children’s activities, serve others, and take time for ourselves each day. We ought to eat right, get plenty of sleep, exercise regularly, and brush and floss daily. Then, of course, the preacher tells us that we ought to read our Bible and pray every day, attend worship three times each week (every day during Gospel meetings), teach a Bible class, find non-Christians to teach, encourage the weak, and visit the sick.

We’re told that we ought to do all these things because each one is important. In fact, we’re made to feel guilty if we don’t do them. But the truth is that there are not enough hours in the day to do all the things we should. How can we cope with living under such tyranny? We must learn to prioritize, to put first things first. We must make sure we accomplish the most important things even if it means putting other things aside for a while. An episode from the life of Christ ought to help us (Lk. 10:38-42).

When Jesus visited the home of His friends Mary and Martha, Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, listening to Him teach while her sister was busy getting things ready for her guest. We can certainly understand Martha’s concern. What conscientious hostess would receive Jesus into her home without making it ready? She thought her work was important, and it may have been, but the text says that she was “distracted” and “bothered” about many things.

The statement that follows contains the crux of the passage. When Martha complained that Mary was neglecting to help with the household duties, Jesus corrected her. In contrast to the “many things” with which Martha was bothered, Jesus said, “one thing is necessary” (vs. 42). That one thing is to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to Him teach. Mary had chosen the good part, and would not be asked to give it up. Perhaps in time Martha’s concerns could be addressed, but first things first.

Mary is one of the great heroines of the Bible. She reminds us that though there are many things we ought to do, only one thing is necessary -- to hear the teaching of Jesus. Anything else may well become a distraction. It is not that these other things are wrong in themselves or even unimportant, but anything that hinders us from learning the Will of God and doing it ought to be set aside. Perhaps there will be time for it later, but we must give priority to Christ.

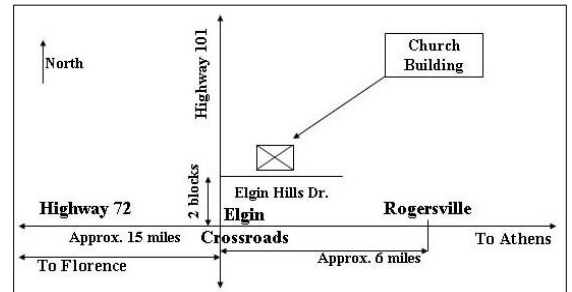
Like Martha, many disciples of Jesus are distracted from spiritual things by their work. The work itself may not be immoral, but because we place so much importance on it and because it demands so much of our time, our work draws us away from Christ. More than a few Christians have been lured away from the Lord by the promise of a bigger income, a nicer house, a more luxurious car, a more lucrative portfolio and a more secure retirement. Acquiring these things takes more time, more travel, and more effort.

When we realize that the things we want (want, not need) are just beyond our capabilities, often both parents go to work to get them, and even less time is left for spiritual things. The demands of raising children -- school, homework, ball practice, band practice, music lessons, get-togethers, and the multitude of other activities young folks are involved in -- then encroach on our time even more. Before we realize it we are no longer sitting at the feet of Jesus. We don’t have time for worship, study and prayer, to prepare for a class, or many of the other

things involved in faithful service. The “worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth” have choked out the Word (Matt. 13:22).

Though we have applied the principles of the Mary and Martha story to our work, many other applications could be made. In fact, anything -- whether it is an activity or a relationship -- that keeps us from spending enough time with Christ both in public worship and private devotion ought to be relegated to its appropriate place. Perhaps that will mean that some things we “ought” to do won’t get done, or that some things will be sacrificed altogether, but we will have chosen the better part. In the long run we will be happy we made the right choice. -- *Bob Hutto*

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The Gospel of Easy Salvation

By George Hutto

When Jesus said that the fields are white unto harvest (Matt. 9:37, 38), surely He didn't mean that all the folks would come running to become Christians like hogs coming in for a feeding frenzy. More than likely, He meant that it's open season on sinners for those who go forth with the gospel – not to shoot them down, but to “persuade them to become Christians” (2 Cor. 5:11). Anybody can become a Christian, but the gospel is not easy to obey – folks have to be persuaded to bear their crosses, to mortify, put to death, the old man of sin (2 Cor. 5:10,11; Lk. 9:23).

Nevertheless, those who peddle the gospel try to make it easy. They preach various gospels of easy salvation – “so easy even a cave man can do it.” In the apostles' day folks were “perverting the gospel,” in effect turning it into “another gospel, which is not another, but some would pervert the true gospel and draw away men after themselves” (Gal. 1:6-9). Don't be shocked that preachers do the same today, when modern marketing techniques have become a way of life for Americans – and a shameless element of religious efforts – put forth all types of entertainment and recreation. Let us go from the very easiest of plans to the more involved ones:

Everybody Is Going To Be Saved (Universalism). Some passages of Scripture might be taken out of context and put forth to teach such a thing (1 Tim. 4:10), and what a comforting doctrine this would be – if only it were true. But the reader knows that the same Bible which teaches salvation from sin also teaches eternal condemnation for those who are lost. Without question, Jesus taught about the narrow way which leads to life and the broad way which leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13, 14).

This gospel of “everybody is going to be saved” is not a true gospel. The last day, the day of judgment, is proof that not all will be going home to be with Jesus; the majority will be assigned to eternal hell.

All The Good And Sincere People Will Be Saved. Well, we all appreciate good and sincere people, but we're talking about sin here. Good and sincere people also get sick and die. Being good and sincere is not a remedy for sickness or for sin.

Make plans to hear
The Religion
of
Environmentalism
Buc Chumbley, speaking

Where: *Elgin Hills church of Christ*

When: **Sunday, June 10**
9:00 a.m. & 4:00 p.m.

Many have made the environment their “god” and environmentalism a religion. What does the Bible say about such?

Cornelius is a case in point whose prayers went up as a memorial before God. He was devout, and did good deeds; a man who was good and sincere and prayed to God every day. If ever there was a good and sincere man, Cornelius was the epitome of such (Acts 10:1,2).

However, Cornelius was lost without the true gospel preached by Peter. In fact, he was told to send to Joppa and fetch Peter who would tell him “words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:14).

Contact us if we can help concerning any spiritual matter. We offer free Bible correspondence courses, tracts on various subjects, and would like to talk with you about being a Christian.

Those who wonder at God’s punishment of good and sincere people have not taken into account the seriousness of God’s disdain for sin and the cost of its remedy (Rom. 5:8-11).

Everyone Who Believes Will Be Saved. Here is an easy and comforting doctrine, but one which is untrue. There are passages which show the need for believing, and, of course, one must believe before he would obey any other of the commandments of the gospel.

The little epistle of James deals with this issue. He says that the devils believe and tremble, but surely they will not be saved by simply believing! “Faith without works is dead” (Jas. 2:19, 20). He says that those who hear the word but do not keep it will be lost (Jas. 1:22-25). He further states that those who know to do good and do not do it are sinning (Jas. 4:17). So, the gospel of “believe only” is easy and comforting but it is a false gospel.

Those Who Say “The Sinners Prayer” Will Be Saved. There are many sincere and good people who preach this gospel, but there is no instance of any sinner being saved by this method in the gospel records of the Bible. They make dedicated efforts to teach people, urge them to believe, and compel them to say the prayer which confesses Christ, as their personal Savior, confesses their sins, and asks Christ to come into their lives. But look, my friend, in the Bible to see if you can find such a conversion process and you will not find it.

Now, here’s what we’ve said: 1) Not everyone is going to be saved; 2) The gospel requires more than simply being good and sincere; 3) Simply believing is not enough to satisfy the true gospel; 4) and saying the Sinner’s Prayer isn’t really taught by the gospel of Christ.

So, what does the true gospel require of sinners that they might be saved from their sins? One other thing which the gospel makes clear is baptism. “...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2;38). Again, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

One more time: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21).

And folks, repentance is a big component of the gospel message as well. It means to stop serving sin and to start serving God (Lk. 24:47; Acts 17:30; 2:38). Baptism does no good for folks who don’t first believe, who don’t confess, or who don’t repent and remain faithful after baptism. And all of these requirements are demanding and ongoing.

Becoming a Christian and living the Christian life are not easy, but the alternatives of eternal condemnation and alienation from God move us to rally at the good news of eternal

salvation – and the gospel plan for getting us there by God’s grace. Jesus bore His cross for us, and there is a cross for each of His disciples (Mk. 8:34). Good news? Yes! If it was good enough for Jesus, then the cross is good enough for us, too.

One last note: for those who don’t believe in God, there really isn’t any gospel or good news at all. Good news that there is no God to face in the judgment? Hardly. Life here is quite short, you know. If you’re looking for evidence, simply look around at the world, the stars, and through a microscope. If you’re looking for the revelation or personal message from God, Jesus Christ will answer all your questions (2 Pet. 1:3). His Gospel is not a gospel of easy salvation, but it is the true gospel.

New Revelations

We have long believed that the sixty-six books that comprise the Old and New Testaments are the complete revelation of God to man. It is true that Scripture does refer to other ancient books. The “book of Jasher” is mentioned in Jos. 10:13 concerning the sun standing still and the moon being stopped. The “acts of Solomon” (1 Kgs. 11:41); the “book of Nathan the prophet and the book of Gad the seer” recorded the acts of King David (1 Chron. 29:29); the acts of Rehoboam (David’s grandson) were written in the “book of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies” (2 Chron. 12:15). Paul refers to an “epistle from Laodicea” in Col. 4:16. (Many scholars believe this refers to the book of Ephesians, p.a.o.) So, it is obvious that there were other books written and known in Bible times. However, this does not mean that they were inspired of God.

In religious circles the word “canon” refers to the list of books that are acknowledged as being divinely inspired and included in the Bible. The formation of this list of books in the Bible was a gradual process. In Jesus’ day the canon of the Old Testament seemed well defined, that is, there was a clear distinction between what was considered Scripture and what was not. Lk. 24:44, 45 is an example of what Jesus considered to be Old Testament Scripture.

The New Testament canon took shape gradually, but within a century or two the books of the New Testament had been collected together. These books are the same ones we know today. Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century, indicated that in Christian worship assemblies “the memoirs of the apostles” were read together with the “writings of the prophets” (*First Apology*, chapter 67). This supports Paul’s statements in Col. 4:16, “Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea,” and in 1 Thes. 5:27, “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.”

By no later than the last half of the second century, a list of the New Testament books appears on a document known as the Muratorian fragment. The Gospel of Luke is the first mentioned by name, but it is referred to as the “third” gospel.

The only books not mentioned on this list are Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter and 1 John; but remember, this document is a fragment. By the third century, Origen names all twenty-seven New Testament books, but states that some were questioned (*Eusebius Ecclesiastical History*, VI 25).

Sadly, there are some in the religious world today who seem to desire attention getting announcements regarding some so-called “new revelation” that threatens the gospel accounts.

These “new revelations” present an alternative account of Jesus’ life and teaching. Since the turn of the Millennium two prominent “new gospel” accounts have been published: the “Gospel of Thomas” and the “Gospel of Judas.”

The “Gospel of Thomas” was discovered in central Egypt in an archaeological dig in 1945. It was written in the Coptic language and dated, in this form, around A.D. 350. The “original” of this work is supposed to have been compiled at the earliest about A.D. existed in the first century.

The “Gospel of Judas” was known by Irenaeus (one of the “church fathers”) since he mentioned it in his work, *Against Heresies*. The announcement of the “new gospel” comes from a manuscript found in a cave in Egypt in the late 1970’s. The text is in the Coptic language and has been dated about A.D. 300. The text must have been written prior to this date, since Irenaeus mentioned it in A.D. 180. Irenaeus’ rejection of the “Gospel of Judas” was due to 1) its late authorship date; 2) it was not historical and 3) it served the interests of a heretical sect of the second century A.D. Liberal scholars usually complain that Irenaeus suppressed “alternative” accounts in the early days of New Testament Christianity in favor of the gospel accounts that were later adopted by the church.

The sixty-six books that make up the canon of Scripture have met the test of time and apostolic authority. The sixty-six books we have today claim inspiration for themselves and early Christians verified that inspiration by examining their contents. These books received virtually universal acceptance by the early church. Yet, not all books were so considered and they were rejected from the canon of Scripture.

We have all the Scripture God intended for us to have in the sixty-six books of the Bible. We need no “new revelations” or “ancient revelations” to make us pleasing to God. - *Bill Feist*

A cordial welcome awaits you at the services of the <i>Elgin Hills Church Of Christ</i>	
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)	
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Visit us on the web at elginhillschurchofchrist.org	

The Elgin Hills

Examiner

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

Volume 2

July 2007

Nos. 7

A question on Drinking, Romans 14 & Fellowship

[**Note:** The following question came from a Christian and friend of ours from another state. It should be of interest to all especially in the light of the prevalence of drinking, our politically correct culture that dares anyone “condemn” someone’s lifestyle, and misunderstandings among Christians concerning Romans 14. – p.a.o]

Hello Phillip.

I would like your thoughts on a subject I am worried about. In our class, the men studied Romans, & they brought up the idea that some of them drink in restaurants when they go out, and we who don’t have no right to judge them. I am shocked that some do this. A lot don’t do it but they overlook the ones who do, & they say we can’t judge them. Should I still fellowship with them? I used to drink & I don’t feel right about this. Their kids will say it is o.k. for them & they are teaching their kids the wrong message. What advice can you give me about fellowshipping with them. I feel awful about this.

Thanks for your help.

In Christian love, -----

Hello

First, I appreciate your concern about this, and am happy to help.

I assume Romans 14:21 is the passage under discussion – “It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth.” ***Foregoing personal liberties for the good of a brother is the overall teaching of the chapter*** (see verses 3, 5, 13, 19, 22, especially ch. 15:1). Further, the practices Paul has under discussion were not wrong and sinful, but right (see verses 5-6, 14, 20); however those who were “weak in faith” (vs. 1) could not practice them with a good conscience (vss. 5, 23). Paul gives examples such as keeping certain days (vss. 5, 6) and eating meats (vss. 2, 3, 6, 15, 20, , 21, 23). Given the fact that drinking wine is mentioned in verse 21 along with eating meat as things that are personal liberties and right, the wine mentioned could not be of an *alcoholic* variety (more on this later). It would have to be something that was right in and of itself, but could lead someone to do wrong since that is the overall teaching of the chapter.

Having said this however, it seems some in the class have the teaching of the chapter reversed. Rather than telling people they can’t “judge” or condemn one who drinks because of this Scripture, the passage actually ***forbids*** one from drinking wine or doing anything that would cause another to stumble. It should be a self-evident truth that leading one to drink *alcohol* would cause him to “stumble” or sin. Even if drinking *alcohol* were a personal liberty, which I do not believe this passage teaches, Paul says don’t do it if it leads one to sin. Brethren in class are saying they ***can*** do the very thing Paul says don’t do – anything that would cause another to “stumble” (sin). “If it doesn’t bother me, I’ll do whatever I want to do and you can’t ‘judge’ me,” is the very attitude Paul condemns (vs. 13).

David Lipscomb made this helpful comment in his commentary on Romans 14:21:

“...From the cases presented, this general practical truth is drawn. He emphasizes the principle that it is good for a Christian neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, which leads the weak to ruin, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is led to sin, or is made weak...It teaches that Christ denied himself to save us; that he gave up heaven, with all its joys and glories, to help us. We must be willing to forego our privileges of a temporal and fleshly character to help our weak brother. Much is said in the Bible on the subject of the use of wine and intoxicants. The Holy Spirit, knowing fully all that was taught on the subject, gives this as

the final deliverance of God to guide men for all time. In it is safety to ourselves and to our fellow man and honor to God. Even if a man thinks he could drink in moderation of intoxicants without injury to himself, he is under obligation to refrain from it, lest by his example a weak brother be led to drink. In leading him to do what leads to his ruin he sins against Christ. He destroys the work of God. I knew a young Christian who became a slave to intoxicants. He was very fond of the preacher, went with him from place to place. He was offered whisky. He refused several times. He refused to touch it. One night he and the preacher lodged with an elder of the church. On the following morning the elder offered him liquor. He refused to drink. The preacher drank. It was again offered the young man. This time he drank. Within a few days he was wallowing in the mire. The preacher and the elder sinned against him, destroyed the work of God, and led him for whom Christ died down to ruin. So in all the paths that lead to sin" (*A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles, Romans*, Gospel Advocate Company, p. 253).

But this begs other questions relative to drinking alcohol. Some say, "What about Jesus turning water into wine?" First, one needs to understand that what we call "wine" now does not describe "wine" of the New Testament. The word translated "wine" (*oinos*) in the New Testament is a *general word* that describes *juice from grapes*. It can mean *either* freshly squeezed juice, *or* grape juice that has fermented. The context determines which one is under discussion. Therefore, reading the word "wine" in the Scripture does not necessarily imply an alcoholic drink. In fact, when Jesus turned water into wine (Jno. 2:1-11), there is more evidence that this "wine" was fresh grape juice rather than alcohol (Jno. 2:1-11), and this is one of the few passages some people think could possibly justify drinking alcohol!

Second, Bible "wines" on which people could become drunk 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. Coffman makes this observation on Romans 14:21: "the wine of Paul's day bore little resemblance to the burning liquors which today are sold under such a label." It is therefore a false parallel to compare wines of our day to even the *fermented* wines of the first century.

Third, drunkenness is plainly condemned in the Scripture (I Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21). Bible wines with even a low alcoholic content had such damaging consequences that Solomon warns not to look at it as it "sparkles in the cup" (Prov. 23:31). He also says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whosoever erreth thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1).

Fourth, while some who desire to drink alcohol admit that the Bible condemns drunkenness, 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).

Notice that Trench defined it as "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"!

As to the matter of fellowship, I would request that this subject be preached and taught publicly since it looks like a problem. Some brethren may be untaught on the subject and are parroting what they have heard from other weak brethren. Faithful teaching goes a long way, *if* people genuinely have a desire to do right – *if* they "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6). Our hope would be that when people learn the truth, they will do what is right regardless of former practices. The importance of the salvation of our own soul should cause us to hate any practice that would put our souls at risk (Matt. 16:26). Further, our helpful or harmful influence on others should likewise be of great concern since our judgment will be based in part on this (see Matthew 18:6-7).

However, given what the Scriptures teach in I Corinthians 5:11; 6:9-11; and Galatians 5:19-21, if after brethren have been sufficiently taught and warned, and they defy such teaching by continuing to drink alcohol, such would need to be marked and withdrawn from as unfaithful brethren (II Thess. 3:6). Such brethren certainly fit the description Paul gives in Romans 16:17: "...mark them that are causing the

divisions and *occasions of stumbling*, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned; and turn away from them.”

When it comes to drinking alcoholic beverages, people should be taught to have the attitude, “Avoid it, pass not by it; Turn from it, and pass on” (Prov. 4:15).

I hope these thoughts have been helpful, and pray good will come from teaching on the subject there.

Brotherly, *Phillip Owens*

What about individually supported “fellowship halls” on church property?

Another Question recently sent:

...What do you say to people who think having a fellowship hall is ok, if the members pay for it and nothing comes out of the treasury?

First, there is no direct statement, necessary inference, or divinely approved example in the New Testament where *churches* built and maintained facilities for the purpose of social and/or recreational purposes. Hence, there is no Scriptural authority for such. A part of Paul’s rebuke of the Corinthians’ abuse of the Lord’s supper was, “What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?” (I Cor. 11:22) This plainly shows it is not only not a work of the church to have social meals, but this passage plainly forbids it.

However, our friend asked about individuals building such a facility and not taking money from the treasury? Usually, such facilities are built on church property. That being the case, other principles are involved such as...

Will it be perceived as a work of the church? If so, it should not be built, because doing so would lead the general public to think the church in question is doing something that they admit is not their work, if they really believe it is not.

Who will pay for the insurance, utilities and upkeep for the facility after it is built? It is easy to say members will pay for it to be built on an individual basis, but what about ongoing expenses? The treasury is used for it on the ones about which I am aware, and hence it becomes a work of the church.

From a practical financial consideration, why would members want to build something that requires an enormous amount of money, time, and effort, just to have a place in which to eat occasionally, when halls, city recreation centers and other places are already available for a nominal rental fee? Members could never use a facility enough to offset simple rental fees. Therefore, it doesn't make good financial sense to build such.

Pat Donahue has debated the issue of fellowship halls – church sponsored social meals and recreation, and has a very fine web site with attached charts. I recommend readers go to bibledebates.info and click on charts under debates for more information.

For churches to be “of Christ,” they must be and do what God authorizes, not what men and women prefer. – *Phillip Owens*

The Elgin Hills Examiner

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

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No. 8



81 Elgin Hills Dr., Rogersville, AL 35652

Have You Heard?

Have you heard about the group of Christians in this community that is not at all like the denominations so often encountered? Some have wondered about this difference and even remarked about it. This group is different in a number of ways but space permits us to consider only a few, and that but briefly.

1. Different, in attitude toward the Bible. These Christians believe the Bible to be the inspired, infallible, complete, authoritative word of God, and that the New Testament is the final expression of that word. This faith is based upon such scriptures as **2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4, 21; Rev. 22:18, 19; Jn. 10:35.** But, do not all Protestant denominations believe this? There was a time when they did, but now many of them will tell you unhesitatingly that they no longer do. Even those denominations which are known as "Fundamentalists" are guilty of dividing the commandments of Christ into "essential" and "non-essential" commands. This, in effect, nullifies the authority of the scriptures because it will let every man decide for himself what is essential and what is not. But not these Christians! They believe that man shall live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Is this what you believe?

2. Different, in attitude toward how to become a Christian. Since their faith in the scriptures is such that it will not allow them to divide the commandments of Christ into essential and non-essential commands, this group of Christians insists that because every man has sinned and separated himself from God (Rom. 3:23; Isa. 59:1, 2) man's only hope of benefiting from the blood of Christ is to do all that Christ has commanded men to do in order to reap these benefits. This, of course, involves faith in Christ as the Son of God (Jn. 20:30,31; Mk. 16:16). But since the scripture says that our faith avails only when it works by love (Gal. 5:6; Jas. 2:24) they also repented of their sins (Acts 17:30), confessed with their mouth what they believed in their heart (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10) and gladly obeyed the command of Christ to be baptized, i.e. immersed (Rom. 6:3,4; Col. 2:12), in water (Acts 8:36) for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16) or to be saved (Mk. 16: 16; 1 Pet. 3:21). When one has done all these things – and not until then – the Bible reveals that he is saved, a child of God by faith (Gal. 3:27), and a member of the Lord's church (cf. Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:1, 2). Is this what you did?

3. Different, in insisting on being simply a Christian – nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else. Every religious group teaches that a person can believe all the truth, obey every command of God, be a Christian while he lives, and go to heaven when he dies without ever belonging to any denomination whatsoever. Since this is true, this group of Christians sees the unimportance of every denomination and hence have not joined any denomination and are not a part of any denomination, but are simply Christians -- nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else! Furthermore, since the Bible reveals that it is wrong and sinful to divide the people of God into different categories, and be called by different religious names (1 Cor. 1:10-13) this group is satisfied with the name given in the New Testament, i.e., the name Christian (Acts 11:26; 26:28 1 Pet 4:16), and pleads for all believers to be one even as Christ prayed (Jn. 17:20, 21). They are satisfied to be simply members of the Lord's church and just Christians. Can this be dangerous? Can it be anything but safe? Is that what you are; or are you a "Christian plus another name"?

4. Different, in its attitude toward church worship and work. Since the New Testament commands Christians to assemble together (Heb. 10:25) these do so, but such does not make them a denomination in any sense of the word. Such is simply the congregation of the Lord's people; the congregation devoted to and belonging to the Lord; or the church that belongs to the Lord, hence the church of Christ or church of God (Acts 20:28; Rom. 16:16).

Since these Christians have the confidence in the scriptures already mentioned, they accept the New Testament as the divine, verbally inspired, and authoritative blueprint for the church throughout all ages.

You are cordially invited to a

Gospel Meeting

with the

Elgin Hills

Church Of Christ

August 12-17, 2007

Bob Waldron, preaching

Schedule:

Sun.	9:00 a.m.	<i>Temptation of Christ</i>
Sun.	10:00 a.m.	<i>Our vital connection with Christ</i>
Sun.	4:00 p.m.	<i>Get thee hence; repudiating sin</i>
Mon.	7:00 p.m.	<i>Lessons from 119th Psalm</i>
Tues.	7:00 p.m.	<i>I desire mercy and not Sacrifice</i>
Wed.	7:00 p.m.	<i>Stewardship</i>
Thurs.	7:00 p.m.	<i>Enoch walked with God</i>
Fri.	7:00 p.m.	<i>Do the gospels belong to the New Testament or the Old?</i>

During our meeting, if you live in the northwest Alabama area and would like a visit with Bob Waldron to discuss spiritual matters, we can make arrangements to do so. Call the building number (256-247-1797) or call me (256-232-2181), Phillip Owens. We want to go to heaven and want you to go also! Our website is elginhillschurchofchrist.org

Whatever acts this blueprint reveals that Christians did when they thus assembled is the pattern for them and to it they cling tenaciously. Since the New Testament reveals that Christians are to assemble on the first day of the week to break bread or eat the Lord's supper, to give of their money, to sing, to teach the apostles' doctrine, and pray together (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; Eph. 5:19), that is exactly what this group of Christians does. Since the Bible forbids adding anything to what is revealed (Rev. 22:18,19) these Christians do not do anything else in church worship. Is this unreasonable? Can it be anything but right? Is this what you do?

The New Testament also tells that the church is to preach the gospel, edify itself, and care for its needy (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 4:16; Acts 6:1-6). This group is glad to do just that.

5. Different, because it has no ecclesiastical or denominational hierarchy. Since this group accepts the New Testament as its blueprint for the church, it is happy to follow the pattern therein given for church organization. The New Testament reveals no ecclesiastical authority higher than the local congregation, except Christ the head of the church (Eph. 1:22, 23). The local congregation being overseen by elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; Titus 1:5-9; 1Tim. 3:1-7) with deacons to serve (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-10) and is not governed by any conference, association, synod, pope, or council, but is simply free under God to do the will of Christ. It has no denominational machinery or earthly headquarters but is a free, independent, and autonomous body of Christians. Is the church of which you are a member like this?

This group occupies a unique and enviable position, indeed! It is a position based upon and produced by the infallible word of God. This group does not occupy this position merely as their opinion but because the word of God tells them and all others to do so. Wouldn't you like to do the same? For more information about this group of Christians who insist on calling Bible things by Bible names and doing Bible things in Bible ways, you are cordially invited to attend with these Christians in your area. Why not check it out? You'll be glad you did.

-- Hiram Hutto

How We Became Human

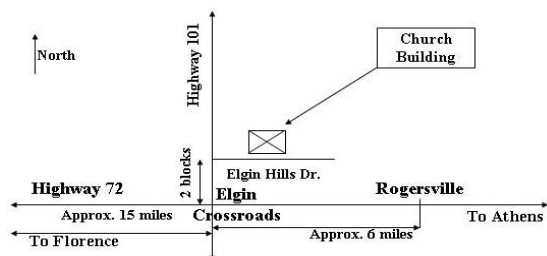
The cover of the Oct. 9, 2006 issue of *Time* featured a picture of a chimp and a child with the lead-in "How We Became Human." The revelation of how chimps and humans "came to be so alike – and yet so different" is attributed to "new discoveries." For many centuries, philosophers and "scientists" have sought to explain human existence, while rejecting faith in God and the Holy Scriptures. While confidently claiming to know how human life began, they continue to search for clues in matter, both terrestrial and from space, as to the origin of life and the varied forms of life.

The folly of such human arrogance and unbelief is well expressed by Paul in the letter to the Romans. First, he says that the invisible attributes of God – His eternal power and Godhead – are clearly seen and understood by His creation (Rom. 1:20). Of such unbelievers he says, "Professing to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:22), with their philosophy leading to idolatry and more degradation (Rom. 1:22-27). This depicts well the moral decay of our own society also, in which many who lead in the downward direction do not "like to retain God in their knowledge," because the knowledge of God and acknowledgement of His revelation interferes with the freedom from moral restraints that they wish to further (Rom. 1:28-32). When the existence of human life is attributed to a long series of evolutionary accidents, then human life is placed by the evolutionist on exactly the same level as animal life and plant life. Look at the results: rapid rise of violence and murder, rape and base immorality, prison and/or fines for taking an eagle's egg from the nest and license to kill an unborn human infant, with impunity, animal rights with animals to be given "ethical rights" and treated as if they have the same standing before God – or even higher standing – than humans have.

The solution is this: faith in God and knowledge and understanding of His Word, with obedience thereto.

-- Gilbert Alexander

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The Elgin Hills Examiner

"...examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so"

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What is the church of Christ?

The church of Jesus Christ is the final result of a long-range plan on the part of God to redeem man from the fall. By transgression Adam and Eve fell from their holy estate and brought the knowledge of sin into the world. Through this knowledge all men in due time also fall into the same state of condemnation by transgression. We are not born in a fallen condition as is so erroneously taught by the doctrine of "original sin," but rather we fall by our own transgression (Eze. 18:20). By our transgression we lose fellowship with God (Isa. 59:1-2). In our fallen condition we are unable to restore ourselves back to God without the help of God (Titus 3:5). But God in his mercy has made possible our redemption back to him through the gift of his son (John 3:16).

Immediately after the fall of Adam and Eve, God in his mercy stated in prophetic words how man would be redeemed from the fall. The seed of woman would bruise the head of the serpent. (Gen. 3:15). We see this prophesy fulfilled in Christ, who, being born of a virgin, was born exclusively of the seed of woman (Matt. 1:18-25). Thus we see that Christ was the one who was to bruise the head of the serpent and make redemption possible. By his perfect and sinless life, Christ became a perfect sacrifice for sin. His sacrificial death on the cross is the *only* means of man's redemption. The fellowship that was lost can now be regained through the atoning benefits of the blood of Christ. His blood reaches back to redeem those who complied with God's law prior to his death as we are told in Hebrews 9:15, and also reaches forward to redeem all who comply with God's law since his death (Heb. 9:12).

Let us now look back and see how God, through a series of progressive steps, has led up to the church of Jesus Christ. Please notice, my friends, that the church of Christ is not an "after thought" on the part of God, nor did it come about as a result of a mistake, but rather it is the final step in God's eternal plan for redeeming man. Read Ephesians 3:9-11.

After the fall of man, God first dealt with man through the Patriarchal system. In this system, God made known his will to the head of each household who in turn revealed the will of God to those of his house. This was a family religion. After the call of Abraham and after Abraham's descendents had become a great nation in Egypt, God sent Moses to deliver the children of Israel out of Egyptian

You are cordially invited to a

Gospel Meeting

with the

Elgin Hills Church Of Christ October 14-18, 2007

Schedule:

- Sun. 9:00 a.m. *The whole counsel of God*
- Sun. 10:00 a.m. *That they may be sound in the faith*
- Sun. 4:00 p.m. *We persuade men*
Preaching Sunday, Charles Maples
- Mon. 7:00 p.m. *The progressive nature of error*
- Tues. 7:00 p.m. *Mistaken concepts about authority*
Preaching Monday-Tuesday, Barney Keith
- Wed. 7:00 p.m. *Do you hear and see?*
- Thurs. 7:00 p.m. *Now is the time to act*
Preaching Wednesday-Thursday, Eugene Britnell

bondage and give them a national law. This law is commonly called the law of Moses. It too required animal sacrifice in atonement for sin. This law was given only to one nation of people, and, therefore was a national religion.

In choosing out the descendents of Abraham, God had a purpose which many seem to overlook. God promised Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3). In Acts chapter three, the apostle Peter explains how Christ is the fulfillment of that promise. The apostle Paul also makes mention of the same in Galatians 3:16. So actually the nation of Israel became the nation through which Christ came into the world and by which all the families of the earth are blessed. Therefore, we can see that through these various steps God was leading up to the time in which he would deal with all men in every nation through a single system of religion, namely, the church of Jesus Christ, or the Christian religion. So the first step was a family religion, the second was a national religion, and the third and final is a world-wide religion where all who obey God are united in the one body, the church.

Under the first two systems, the Patriarchal and Jewish, a blood sacrifice was required in the forgiveness of sin (Heb. 9:22). But the blood of animals could not actually take away sin (Heb. 10:1-4). Why then were they required to offer such a sacrifice if it did not take away sin? The answer is simple. This was a condition God required them to meet in order for the blood of Christ to actually cleanse them of sin when the perfect sacrifice was made. If they did not offer the animal sacrifice, then the blood of Christ, when shed, would not reach back and cover their sins.

Now how does the church fit into this picture? By his sacrificial and vicarious death, Christ purchased the church (Acts 20:28). All who are purchased by the blood of Christ are a part of the church. Thus the church is the body of saved people. Since the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), and since Christ is the savior of the body (Eph. 5:23), then for one to be saved, he must be in the church.

Now for a final question. How does one enter the church of Christ? On the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ, the church of Christ had its beginning. On that day the apostle Peter sought to persuade the people that Christ was the promised savior, the redeemer of mankind. When those who heard Peter's words were convinced that Christ was the promised redeemer, they said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's reply was, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Verse 41 tells us that they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there was added unto them about three thousand souls. Verse 47 tells us that the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

When a believer in Christ today repents of his sins and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, he is added by the Lord to the same church that people were added to in the beginning. The Lord does not divide people up by adding some to one denomination and some to another. He did not add people to denominations in the beginning for none existed. If the will of Christ had been followed by men down through the centuries, no denominations would exist today. Obedience to the will of Christ never established a denomination nor made one a member of one. It takes obedience to the doctrines and commandments of men to build denominations, and it takes the same to get into them. Christ added people to the church, the undenominational body of Christ. He prayed that all might be one, and be reconciled unto God in the one body, the church (John 17:20-22 and Ephesians 2:16).

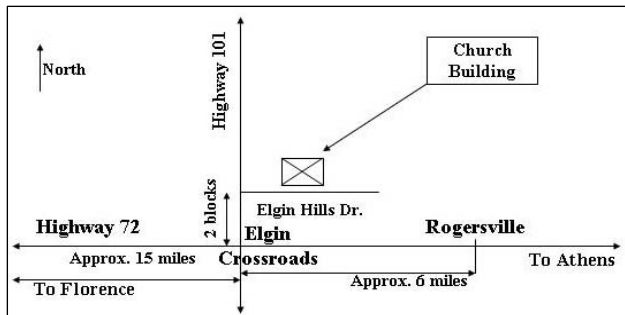
Some interesting and important information on this is also found in Galatians chapter three. Here Paul discusses the promise which God made to Abraham that he would bless all nations through his seed. In verse twenty-six, he reminded the Galatians that they were children of God by faith in Christ. In verse twenty-seven, he states how they became children of God, that is, by being baptized into Christ. In verse 29 he shows that if they are in Christ and belong to Christ, they are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise which God made to Abraham.

So, the saved in this age are in the blood-bought church of Jesus Christ. That being true, we have the answer to the question, "What is the church of Christ." It is the body of the saved.
-- Eugene Britnell

Scientology

The extremes into which people will allow themselves to be drawn are sometimes amazing. A classic example is the scientology movement. It is neither science nor theology, according to current information. It was founded in 1954 by L. Ron Hubbard, a science fiction writer who added more fiction or fantasy to his works. It calls human beings "thetans," a term that is neither scientific nor Biblical. It teaches a form of reincarnation, a doctrine not found in the Bible and certainly not established by science. Worship of God is not part of its practices. It is secretive with regard to its highest level of teachings. Though it is totally human in origin, one denominational preacher is quoted as saying, "I haven't found anything that deals with man better than what Mr. Hubbard has written." What about the Bible? Is it not greater than human wisdom?

Now, what is the point of this writing? It is an effort to show that, once God and His truth have been rejected, there is no end to human speculation, which is open to the whole human imagination. But we are to cast down every imagination "and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God..." (II Corinthians 10:3-6). If one rejects God and His Scriptures, he then cannot say what is right and what is wrong. He has neither compass nor anchor. He must logically accept all religious philosophies with their divergent moral and religious standards (Romans 1:18-32). All of the civil laws that have their basis in the truth of the Scriptures lose their power and validity. God's truth declares one standard of right and wrong, one rule of morality and ethics, one church purchased by Jesus Christ, one form of worship that is pleasing to God one day of judgment of all, and one hope of eternal life. If the Scriptures are uninspired, and if we can not depend upon them for truth, then every man's way is right and unchallengeable. Let those who think that the Bible cannot be understood consider the ultimate conclusion of unbelief in both the authenticity and the functional perfection of the word of God. Would you reject scientology and at the same time find a place for Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, and Calvinists? Note Hebrews 1:1-4; 2; 1-4, and John 4:24.
-- Gilbert Alexander



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We offer free Bible correspondence courses and tracts on a variety of subjects. CD's of lessons preached are also available free of charge. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Let us know if we can help.