

“CHRIST AND THE CHURCH”

It is not uncommon today to hear people devalue the church. Some say in effect, "Christ, yes; the church, no." While some profess they love Jesus, desiring even to follow Him, they have little use for "the church." The Scriptures, however, are clear: One cannot have the church without Christ, and one cannot have Christ without the church. The church was God's idea. God's plan. It is not manmade.

In fact, observe the close relationship between Christ and the church. Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 5:22-23a); He is the complete voice of authority. Christ is the Founder of the church. Christ said to Peter, "On this rock [the confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God], I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Mat. 16:18). Christ is the foundation of the church. No building or institution can be stronger than the foundation on which it rests. And for the church, "no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Christ is the Savior of the body, which is the church: "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23).

Indeed, as has often been noted by some in an attempt to minimize the church; "the church doesn't save anyone." However, Christ saves the church! In fact the church is composed of the saved (Acts 2:47). Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25). We usually judge the value of something by the price we pay for it. For what price was the church purchased? Christ purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). One cannot separate Christ from His church.

A low estimation of the church may be due to a lack of understanding of what the church truly is, as taught in the Bible. There is also a misconception of what the church is all about. One of the most simplistic, yet one of the most beautiful images of the church in Scripture is that of the family of God. As such, the church is designed to be a place of loving encouragement (1 Thes. 5:11; Heb. 3:12-13) to those who are seeking to follow Christ. Also, it is God's desire for His family, the church, to grow and grow. God wants His family to share the good news about Jesus Christ, as Jesus instructed His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen" (Mat. 28:19-20).

How does one become a member of God's family, the church? To those who were convicted of their sin and believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41). "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). Only the Lord can add one to His church when one obeys the Gospel as Peter and the apostles presented it. Has the Lord added you to His church?

*David A. Sargent,
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BELVEDERE BEACON

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

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CHRISTIANITY AND TRIALS

James 1:2-8 looks at the Christian's attitude toward trials. "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." **OBSERVE:**

"COUNT IT ALL JOY." The joy of trials comes when one stays faithful through trials. It brings joy when one comes through a trial with His eyes still focused on Jesus. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." (Hebrews 2:9). **"LET PATIENCE HAVE ITS PERFECT WORK."** Patience is the quality of perseverance or steadfastness. (Romans 5:3-5.) Patience has to do with our loyalty or commitment to God. Patience leads to Christian maturity.

"LET HIM ASK OF GOD - WISDOM." Christians go to God to gain the wisdom necessary to deal with trials. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

"LET HIM ASK IN FAITH." Without faith Christians cannot please God. (Hebrews 11:6.) Do not allow trials to cause you to doubt God or His care and love for you. Always believe that God knows what is best for you, wants what is best for you and is active to bring about what is best. The person who does not have faith in God through trials is "unstable" and vacillating because of being "double-minded." With a strong faith, always anchored in God, Christians can say with Paul, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19.) Trials will come but God is there caring, loving, helping and blessing through good times and bad.

To become a Christian, you must hear God's word and believe (John 6:44-45), you must repent of all sins (Acts 2:38), you must confess Christ as Lord (Romans 10:9-10), and you must be baptized to be saved (1 Peter 3:21). It is the desire of Jesus that everyone be saved. He said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30).

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 a.m.
Morning Worship 11.00 a.m.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

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(I believe what is stated in this article is very important. Too many in this country are afraid of offending Muslims but not afraid of offending Almighty God! Anything that is even remotely Christian or such that would be blasphemous against the Creator of the Universe is "fair game." They defend their "right" to put forth such blasphemy and show their hypocrisy in their "political correctness" that they will not offend Muslims - even though it was those who were responsible for attacks of 9/11 and indeed other terrorist acts throughout the world were doing so in the name of "Allah" and of Mohammed. - K.J.C.).

An article in Celebrity Briefs is rather telling about the world in which Christians live today. The title of the Brief is "'South Park' banned from showing prophet." The article continues, "Banned by Comedy Central from showing an image of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, the creators of 'South Park' skewered their own network for hypocrisy in the cartoon's most recent episode."

"the comedy - in an episode aired during the Holy Week for Christians - instead featured an image of Jesus Christ defecating on President Bush and the American flag.... Muslims consider any physical representation of their prophet to be blasphemous." (Daily Press, 4/14/2006).

Several things come to mind in reading and digesting this Brief. One of the first things that come to mind is the hypocrisy of the program. I have not seen the program, and will not see it. I couldn't tell you anything about the program, just what has been shown of the news or on previews shown of the program. The program's view is that it is okay to disgrace any religion as long as there is no threat of violence to the people or the program. "Christianity" has, in the past, been in some forms a violent religion. (The word Christian is in quotation marks; I am using it, as the article does - not the usage of the Bible.) But, in this century, thus far, "Christianity" is a peaceful religion. With things like this, though, that may change. Christianity of the Bible will always be a peaceful religion!

A second thing that comes to mind is the complete disrespect and disgrace to the Creator of all things. This complete disrespect and disgrace is not new. Much money, many tax dollars have been given to "artists" (?) for doing the same thing in different and in like ways. But, in the minds of many, this kind of disrespect and disgrace is okay because of artistic expression. The people, the Jews, of Jesus' day disrespected Him; they crucified Him. So it has been through the ages since.

A third thing that comes to mind is that Christians, (I now use the term biblically) will suffer for the Cause of Christ. They will not lift up the sword or the gun against the devil and his angels, which these folks are. The Christian will patiently endure whatever is brought against him or her. These will follow the words of the Lord, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12). The words of Peter are so apropos, "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:19-24).

I close with the words of Peter, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12-13). Beloved, listen to all of God's word; God will do thee good!

Thought For Today, 04/14/06,
Jimmie Z. Gribble, Portsmouth, VA

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Let us continue to keep in our prayers Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Kathy Treadway's mother, Kathy Treadway was not out Sunday because of allergies.

Susan Arnold was home with Aiden who was sick Wednesday evening as were Ron and Jennifer Wilson and Maomi Aaron.

The next "pot-luck" fellowship will be following our morning services next Sunday (April 23). Plan to stay and eat with us.

LISTEN TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST RADIO PROGRAM
1050 AM -- WFAM
Sundays 8.00 a.m. to 8.30 a.m

A Great Difference

An English writer has said, "The early Christians did not go around saying, 'Look what the world is come to.' Rather they went out with great joy and said to all men, 'Look what has come to the world!'"

There is a great difference between these two attitudes. Yes, the world is in bad shape—but read the second chapter of Romans and you will find that the world was in an awful condition in Paul's time. Nearly all thoughtful men agree that man is in a terrible predicament, but the unique Gospel of Jesus Christ offers the solution to man's problems. Look! See what has come into the world—God's revelation of Himself in all His power, wisdom, and love through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son. This is indeed glorious news! This is a message which we cannot keep to ourselves, but we must tell everybody about it.

No wonder Christians are radiant with joy. They have found the treasure all men are seeking. They have seen what has come into the world in the advent of Jesus Christ, and they are working for the advancement of His kingdom until He comes again.

Author Unknown
"Contending For The Faith"