

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Who Built the Church?

In the New Testament one reads about the church. For example, Paul wrote that the house of God "is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). When reflecting on his personal unworthiness to be an apostle, Paul acknowledged, "I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9). Who built this church which is mentioned, described, and discussed on the pages of apostolic writings?

Neither Abraham Nor Moses

Abraham was a great and faithful man of God. Called of God to go into a strange land, he received special promises and became the head of the race that we commonly identify as the Messianic nation. Known as "the Friend of God," he did not build the church.

Moses was divinely commissioned to lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt. He was their lawgiver. He was the writer of the first five books of the Old Testament. He led the people during the trying years of wilderness wanderings. His was an illustrious career, but he did not build the church of the New Testament.

Neither Solomon Nor Elijah

Solomon was a famous king who expanded the kingdom of Israel into an empire. He built a fine palace for himself and his crowning achievement was the building of the temple in Jerusalem. However, Solomon did not build the church.

Elijah was a courageous prophet who lived during the divided kingdom. He rebuked the wicked king Ahab for troubling Israel. He is remembered especially for his contest with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. He and Moses appeared with Christ on the mount of transfiguration, but Elijah did not build the church.

Not John the Baptist

Some religious people have argued that the church was established by John. Furthermore, some think that since John was called “the Baptist,” the church should be called “the Baptist Church.” John was called “the Baptist” because he baptized, not because he was “a” Baptist religiously. And John did not start the church. John was already dead, according to Matthew 14, when the building of the church was still future (Matt. 16:18). John’s mission was to prepare the way for the Messiah. He was not sent to build the church.

Not Martin Luther

There is a church that wears the name of Luther; however, that church is not revealed in the New Testament. Martin Luther was not born until A.D. 1483. That is more than fourteen hundred years too late for him to have been the founder of the New Testament church. No matter how much we may admire Luther for his sparking the great Reformation in Germany, we dare not exalt him unduly. The church described in the Bible existed for centuries before Luther nailed his ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral and broke away from Roman Catholicism. One may read about Christians in the New Testament but not about Lutherans.

Not John and Charles Wesley

The Methodist Church traces its origin back to the Wesley brothers, but they lived in the 18th century. Methodism had its roots in the Church of England. King Henry VIII had separated the English or Anglican Church from the control of the Pope of Rome in 1534. It was about two centuries later that the Wesleys organized societies that developed into the Methodist Church. The church of the New Testament was in existence in the first century. It was never referred to as the Methodist Church. The Wesleys could not have been the builders of the church of the Bible.

Not Alexander Campbell

Born in the late 18th century, Alexander Campbell was a 19th century religious reformer. His quest for truth led him from the Presbyterians into close union with Baptists and then to bitter controversies with Presbyterians, Baptists, and other denominational leaders. Campbell pleaded with people to return to the ancient order of things. He urged individuals and congregations to discard from their faith and practice everything that is not found written in the New Testament of the Lord and Savior. Some of his positions in later years did not measure up to his plea. Whatever one may think of Campbell and his efforts, he

came on the scene much too late to be the builder of the New Testament church. He made no claim to being the founder of the church described in the Bible.

Jesus Christ

In Matthew 16:18, after Peter had confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus said, “. . . And upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” This passage clearly identifies Jesus Christ as the builder of the New Testament church.

Jesus “purchased” the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). He paid the price that there might be a called-out body of people, a redeemed race, a chosen generation. He “loved the church” and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25). The church belongs to him. It does not belong to Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Elijah, John the Baptist, Luther, Wesley, Campbell, or any other man. The church is Christ’s own purchased possession; it is peculiarly His.

Jesus is “the head of the church” (Eph. 5:23). He became its head after being exalted to the right hand of the Father in heavenly places (Eph. 1:20-23). Since the church is the body of people belonging to Christ, He is “the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18).

It is the Lord who adds people to the church (Acts 2:47). Obedience to the gospel results in salvation, and the church is composed of the saved. Jesus taught that people must believe and be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:15-16). We are “baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). Jesus Christ established the New Testament church through the preaching of the apostles. All who respond to the gospel by obeying from the heart are brought under his headship and become a part of the glorious body which is his church.

Men have built numerous religious bodies, but no man is capable of building what the Lord established. Man may build something and call it a “church.” However attractive it may be, no man-made church is equal to, a suitable substitute for, or as important as the church built by Christ.

- Irvin Himmel, *Truth Magazine*, 05/18/2000

Lessons from Genesis One

Genesis 1 is intended as an introduction to God: *Genesis 1 is an introduction to the wisdom of God.* This becomes a background of the wisdom for the rest of the Bible. There

is not anything that is short or lacking in God's creation. God did not have to ask anybody about His methods of procedure in creation (Romans 11:31-36).

Genesis 1 is an introduction to the power of God. If God had the power to bring the worlds into existence then why should He have any problem with any other miracle that is recorded in the Bible? This includes the Virgin Birth or resurrection!

Genesis is an introduction to the eternity of God (Isaiah 57:15—ASV).

Genesis 1 is an introduction to the goodness of God. All that is needed for man's happiness is provided for him. The goodness of God becomes the background for our redemption. God has an interest in what happens to man. His grace has ever provided what man has needed (Deuteronomy 8:18; James 1:17; Titus 1:17).

Genesis is an introduction to the love of God (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-9).

Genesis introduces us to the spiritual nature of God. The spiritual nature of God becomes the background of man's fellowship with God. Faith is a spiritual principle. Love is a spiritual principle. These have to do with our responses to our Creator (Genesis 1:26-27; Deuteronomy 6:5-6; Matthew 22:37; I John 5:3; John 14:15).

Genesis is an introduction to the authority of God. When God delegates authority that does not diminish God's authority. Note Jesus and the apostles (Matthew 28:19). God's method of operation is through His Word (And God said). Notice the number of occurrences in Genesis 1 of: "And God said."

Genesis is an introduction to the perfection of God. The knowledge of God is fundamental to all correct knowledge. Error is based on a misunderstanding of the character of God. God will not overlook false doctrine (Matthew 15:9, 13; Galatians 1:6, 9).

Genesis 1 gives emphasis to the unity of God. The unity of God opposes denominationalism. The New Testament teaches the necessity of unity based on truth (I Corinthians 1:10; John 17:20-21). Each denomination has its own distinctive name and doctrines. This would be foreign to II John 9-11. False teaching is filled with poison. We must not follow after that which is crooked and perverse. We must see righteousness as the solution to all our problems. Sin is the root of all of our problems. Sin creates war in the soul. This being the case, the only solution for us today is the Gospel of Christ (Isa. 52:7; Rom. 10:15; 1:16-17; Mark 16:15-16).

The Gospel must be believed and obeyed if we want to be saved.

- Franklin Camp

- > "If you want someone to stop listening, just start bragging about yourself!"
 - > "Humility is a funny thing; the minute you say you got it, you lost it!"
 - > "People who constantly criticize are very often facing the wrong direction!"
 - > "We're all just parts, nobody's the whole!"
 - > "To seek after a quality life without involving God in it is like trying to play football, well, without the football!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"The Bond Which Must Not Be Broken!"*
(Text: Matt. 5:31-32); Sunday evening: *"Tremendous Claims!"* Part 2 (John 5:16-24).