

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.

Jackson, TN 38305

oldhickorycofc.com

April 19, 2015

Volume 35, # 17

God's Ark

History's most famous boat is always referred to as "Noah's ark." After all, Noah built it. But the truth of the matter is, it was not his; it was God's ark. God commissioned it. "By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household . . ." (Hebrews 11:7). And God designed it. He told Noah, "This is how you shall make it . . ." (Genesis 6:15), followed by a list of specifics.

Human wisdom might have called for some changes to God's plan. "Cover it inside and out with pitch" surely did not produce a very aesthetic vessel. One door would never meet modern fire codes. And how could one window provide sufficient ventilation for a zoo full of animals? Perhaps it was a really *lonnnnnng* window!

If any of these alterations occurred to Noah, he did not act on them. To the contrary, the Bible says, "Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did." In fact, for emphasis, it says that twice (Genesis 6:22; 7:5).

Had Noah changed any of God's specifications, then it truly would have been "Noah's ark." He might have still called it "God's ark," but it would no longer be God's. And it would have floated about as well as a bottomless bucket!

Noah had too much integrity to tinker with God's will. He built by faith, which comes from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). And he built in reverence, a respect for God that knows His way is always best, regardless of whether we see why. Noah simply obeyed.

Modern man needs to learn the lesson of God's ark. When we change God's blueprint, the result is our product, not His.

People have taken God's plan for the church and altered it in every way imaginable: its purpose, its work, its organization, its worship, its entrance requirements, etc. They still call it the Lord's church, but it isn't even a distant cousin to the church you read about in God's word. The same thing is true of marriage, baptism, and a number of other divine provisions.

In the days of the flood, disobedience characterized the lost, not the saved. That hasn't changed.

- Frank Himmel

Respect for God's Authority

The standard of what is acceptable in religion for many is whether it satisfies the individual. Many "shop" for a religion that meets their personal preferences, treating the Scriptures as a salad bar -- picking things they like and passing over others. Many declare satisfaction with the course they have chosen in religion without ever considering the question, "Is God satisfied with my religion?"

The whole conclusion is not, serve God as you please, but "Fear God and keep His commandments" (Eccl. 12:13). Our purpose in daily activities and in worship should be to strive to please God. Those who truly seek to serve God will not be satisfied until they do this.

We must be willing to test our practices and beliefs to see if they agree with the Scriptures. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2Cor. 13:5). The only way to please God in all that we do is to follow His revealed will -- to simply read and study the Scriptures and follow them in all we do, not adding to them or taking away (2 Jn. 9; Deut. 4:2). Those who fail to do this lack respect for the authority of God as Lord and Master.

The inspired apostle declared, "And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord" (Col.3:17). To "do all in the name of the Lord" means to respect the authority of the Lord in everything. We must have God's authority for all that we do and that authority must be established from the Scriptures; for it is there that God has revealed His will for us. So, our personal

morality, conduct, religious beliefs, and things practiced in worship must be based on book, chapter, and verse.

One may be satisfied with the manner in which they live and worship, while God may not be, making life and worship worthless before the Lord. As Jesus warned, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15:8,9). Therefore, let us search the Scriptures to establish authority for all that we believe and practice showing respect God's authority.

- Paul Smithson

Limping Between the Two

When Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel he also presented a challenge to the children of Israel. He said, "How long go ye limping between the two sides? If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). God has always expected His people to declare themselves. This same challenge needs to be presented to those who would identify themselves as the people of God today. If we are going to serve Jehovah then let's do so. There is no room in the kingdom of God for half-hearted, lukewarm service (See Revelation 3:14-19). To those members of the body of Christ who are not faithful in their service to the Lord, we ask, "How long go ye limping between the two sides?

- James Hahn

Dying Wedding Vows

Remember when “honor and obey” was a standard part of wedding vows? Then, the feminist movement said, “No way will I vow to obey my husband!” Today, you rarely hear a couple using this worthy vow to recognize and accept the roles and relationships God established in marriage (Genesis 2:22-24; 3:16; Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:17).

Now, “till death do us part” is also being rejected. More and more couples are opting for such preemptive phrases as “for as long as our love shall last,” “until our time together is over,” and “for as long as our marriage shall serve the greatest good” (“Till Death Do Us Part” is Dying Out, Jennifer D’Angelo, FoxNews.com, July 22, 2005). The rationale offered is, “Don’t make a promise you can’t keep.”

The same article noted that actor Brad Pitt considers his marriage to Jennifer Aniston a “total success” for having lasted five years. Rationalization does not change reality: after five years, their marriage ended in failure, not success.

When a husband and wife do not honor marriage for what God intends it to be—a life-long union—they lay the foundation for marital failure. Add to that a distorted and selfish definition of love, and you have a recipe for trouble (Hebrews 13:4; Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Ephesians 5:25-31; Titus 2:4). To vow “as long as love shall last” implies the person has no say in the matter; that somehow love decides when “it” will leave a marriage. No, love is a conscious decision of the heart that acts toward its object in good ways (in this case, the husband toward his wife, and vice versa). If love does not last it is because one or both parties decided to no longer love the other.

We should also note that wedding vows mean something; they are solemn commitments to bind oneself to another and to fulfill the obligations of a husband or wife. One such obligation is to honor the permanency of marriage. When marriage is not viewed as "till death do us part" it becomes increasingly easy to end it rather than solving the problem (with love). Vows must not be lightly made nor conveniently broken (Proverbs 20:25; Ecclesiastes 5:4-5). God says marriage is "Till death do us part," regardless of the changing attitudes toward it (Matthew 19:4-6; Malachi 2:14-16).

- Joe R. Price

- > "The things you do for yourself are gone when you are gone, but the things you do for others remain as your legacy."
 - > "Do you want to know who you are? Don't ask. Act! Action will delineate and define you."
 - > "Indifference and neglect often do much more damage than outright opposition."
 - > "What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."
-

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*The Vine and the Branches!*" (Text: John 15:1-8); Sunday evening: "*What Does the Bible Say About Near-Death Experiences?*" [#3 of 3] (Rev. 14:13).

GOSPEL MEETING 2015: Our Gospel Meeting is scheduled for July 19-24, with Jerry Crolius, of Conway, AR, preaching.