

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Do We Get or Give?

A great deal has been said in recent years about going to church to get what your soul needs, but not nearly as much has been said about going to church to give what God deserves.

Worship is more than just getting something from God. Our emphasis on going to church to have our souls refreshed has tended to overshadow the fact that worship is not basically a receiving process. It is a matter of giving. Worship is the giving of our praise and adoration to almighty God. It is the recognition of His WORTH-SHIP, or worthiness. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." (Rev. 5:12). Public worship is what happens when we gather together to unite in expressing our love and faith toward such a majestic and merciful Lord.

- A. Lee Baltzer

Thieves In The Church

Do we have any thieves in the church? Well, maybe we don't have the kind that break into stores and take the money from the safe or the kind that break into homes and take the silverware. But there are other ways of being a thief.

Long ago the Old Testament prophet asked this question: "Will a man rob God?" (Malachi 3:8). This is a very serious question: WILL A MAN ROB GOD? Some might answer, "Of course not!" A man would not rob his Creator! But after the question in Malachi, God says, "Yet ye have robbed me." So, the answer is, "Yes, men will rob God." But let us continue the quotation from the Old Testament. "But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

Yes, men will rob God. They rob Him when they refuse to give to His cause according to their prosperity. It would be exceedingly tragic to stand in the presence of the Lord in the judgment day with a record of ROBBING GOD all the days of our lives! If you have been robbing Him, repent, pray, and start giving as the Bible teaches.

- Unknown, via *The Instructor*, 02/1965

How does the church come into existence in a given community?

Have you ever seriously considered how it is that the church begins its existence in a certain locality? How does the church begin? To answer such a question, we can look within the pages of the New Testament and see for ourselves how the church came into existence in a community during the first century. Let's consider the beginning of the church in the Roman province of Syria, in the city of Antioch. Acts 8:1 reveals that in Jerusalem a great persecution of God's people arose which was the result of the killing of Stephen. Members of the Jerusalem church were "scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria". "Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word." (Acts 8:4). Shifting now to Acts 11:19-26:

"So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

In these passages we learn several things about the establishment of the church in the city of Antioch:

(1.) THE WORD OF THE LORD WAS PREACHED. They preached ONLY the words that Jesus Christ had commanded them to preach (Mark 16:15). They preached ONLY the truth into which the Holy Spirit guided them (John 16:13). A fitting description of such preaching is found in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5:

"And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

Notice that the message preached by Paul is referred to as "the testimony of God" and "the power of God." He did not preach the wisdom of men!

(2.) PEOPLE BELIEVED the word of the Lord. Only when they heard the word of the Lord was faith produced. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:17).

(3.) PEOPLE TURNED UNTO THE LORD when they believed the word of the Lord. They turned themselves unto the Lord because it was commanded of them when the gospel was preached. At Lystra, Paul and Barnabas spoke to the people and said, "We ... preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, ..." (Acts 14:15). Paul spoke of his obedience to the command of Christ before king Agrippa by stating that he had declared to those of Damascus, Jerusalem and Judaea (even Gentiles) "that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance." (Acts 26:20).

(4.) Those that *believed* the word of the Lord and *turned* unto the Lord also REMAINED TRUE TO THE LORD. They were admonished, "with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;" to continue with the Lord, and be steadfastly devoted to Him. They continued with the Lord by abiding in His gospel (His truth, His doctrine). "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; ..." (2 John 9a).

(5.) Others were ADDED UNTO THE LORD. They were added to the Lord through the same process that the previous believers were. These people were called "the church," "disciples," and "Christians". Thus, when we look at the church in Antioch, we see disciples; we see Christians. While looking at disciples in Antioch, we are seeing the church that the Lord Jesus promised to build (Matthew 16:18). We can clearly see from our study of the passages mentioned *how* the church began in Antioch, and thereby, how it begins *in any other place on earth*.

The church is the fruit of seed (the word of God, Luke 8:11) that has been sown in honest and good hearts (Luke 8:15); the church is what is produced. People with such hearts "hold it fast ... with perseverance" and it bears fruit. Truth, and ONLY truth, is the thing that can produce Christians. Put another way, truth, and only truth, is the only thing that can produce the church. The pure, complete, unadulterated TRUTH can produce ONLY the church that belongs to Christ, as this is His means of building it. This body of saved

people that belongs to the Lord do so, not exclusively because they *call* themselves "the Church of Christ," but because they have obeyed His gospel and allowed His doctrine to make of them what it will, the "church of Christ" (cf. Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16). The true church that belongs to the Lord (and He knows the ones who do, 2 Timothy 2:19) consists of people that, with resolute heart, remain true to the Lord, as we have already shown. The true church of Christ is not made up of people who remain true to a church building, or to other people, or to "philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world," (Colossians 2:8).

The church can begin and even continue its existence in any place where two essentials exist: (1) TRUTH, and (2) PEOPLE DEDICATED TO THE TRUTH. When people add to the truth, or take away from the truth, or otherwise change the truth, the church can no longer maintain its identity as belonging to the Lord. It is impossible for a perverted message to bring about the existence of the church belonging to the Lord in any location of the world. Men are at fault when this happens, MEN and MEN ALONE! The truth will always remain true without any help from us. Truth will endure forever (1 Peter 1:25, it is the message preached by the apostles). When people give up their dedication to the truth, regardless of how well intentioned they may be, they cease to be the true church. This condition of departure from Christ should come as no surprise to the Bible student: "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away [depart – KJV] from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons," (1 Timothy 4:1). The Bible says that some shall depart from THE FAITH, and the ones who depart have failed to have a resolute heart that remains true to the Lord. The only way Christ's church can remain in ANY place is for people to remain DEDICATED TO TRUTH. Such dedication is certainly no easy task for people who prefer to be dedicated to preachers, friends, buildings, human traditions, family heritages, etc.

The Bible tells us the sum total of all that we need to know in order to bring the church into existence and to sustain it. What we need to do is learn of God's plan and work through God's plan, and He has only ONE plan! Everyone knows that when you plant apple seeds the resulting fruit is apples, not pears, beans, or watermelons. That common sense approach applies in God's kingdom also. When the seed of the kingdom (the pure word of God) is planted (sown in the hearts of men and women), the resulting fruit is the true church (Christians). Just as surely as watermelons are not produced by apple seeds, William Miller's church, Roger Williams' church, John Smyth's church, Pope Boniface III's church, Mary Baker Eddy's church, D. S. Warner's church, Aimee S. McPherson's church, Charles T. Russell's church, Martin Luther's church, John Wesley's church, Joseph Smith's church, P. F. Bresee's church, John Calvin's church, Ellen G. White's church, or ANY other church founded by men are not produced by the pure gospel seed. Some doctrine other than truth produces some fruit other than Christians.

- Gary Smalley

- > "Folks who hide their heads in the sand won't leave any footprints!"
 - > "In the days when a woodshed stood behind the American home, a great deal of what passes as juvenile delinquency was settled out of court!"
 - > "One reason the church is losing young people is they have been given a free hand, but not in the proper place!"
 - > "It isn't easy for truth to squeeze itself into a head that is filled with prejudice!"
 - > "Why is it we never experience growing pains in the head?"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSON: The sermon for Sunday morning is: "*Jesus Christ, The Way To Forgiveness!*" PART 2 (Text: Colossians 1:13-14).

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)