

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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THIS CHURCH

The church of Christ at this place is nothing but a church. There is no social program, nor does the church have a kitchen, banquet hall, gymnasium or television lounge. The church does not promote fun, frolicking, frivolities or feasting. It has no ball teams, skating parties, hay rides or wiener roasts. We have decided to try to "hold" our young people with religion. This church specializes in being a church.

The church of Christ at this place is not a member of any organization larger than itself. It has no organization within it smaller than itself (its classes are not organizations but mediums of the teaching program of the church). It sustains organic ties and contributes to no organization outside of itself. As we said before, this church specializes in being just a church.

This is not an apology. We believe that being a church is enough to be (that's all that Jesus made it). And that involves much on the positive side.

Jesus established the church for spiritual purposes. It is a "spiritual house". The "stones" of which it is made are people who are also a priesthood, in order to offer up acceptable spiritual sacrifice (worship) to God through Christ (1 Peter 2:5). Therefore, we meet to worship God (we have not as yet discovered a better reason for meeting) just as Christians did in the New Testament. We are careful to do as they did, namely, to sing and pray, and on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper and give liberally (1 Corinthians 14:15; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). We are equally careful not to do anything as worship that He has not authorized for worship, such as counting beads, burning incense and playing musical instruments. We want to do all that He wants, and nothing He does not want. After all, a church of Christ must worship as authorized by Christ.

The Bible teaches that the church has work to do (we take it seriously). This important work is recognized, emphasized and done by the church of Christ at this place. It is the preaching of the gospel of Christ, which is God's power to save, and therefore of the utmost importance and urgency (Ephesians 4:12; Romans 1:16). The church, of all the institutions and organizations in the world, is the one to which God committed this work. It is "the pillar and ground of truth." (1 Timothy 3:15). Churches of Christ therefore sounded out the word. The church at Thessalonica sounded out the word in Macedonia and Achaia; the church at Philippi supported Paul as part of its evangelical work (1 Thessalonians 1:8; Philippians 4:14-17). The teaching of Divine truth to its members is an integral part of its work, as the flock is fed spiritual truth and the body thus builds up itself (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:12, 15-16). The secondary work of ministering to the needs of the saints is to be done as the need arises, and is thus done by the church of Christ at this place (Acts 6:1-6; 2 Corinthians 9:1-ff).

Yes, this church specializes at being a church. It's a full time job! Besides, to be of Christ, a church cannot be anything but a church.

- Jere Frost

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Share a Quote ...

Regarding 1 John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."

The word ... grievous [burdensome, NASB] describes a "weight" or "burden." It is the term which Paul chose in 2 Corinthians 1:8 when he described the crushing effect of events in Asia, "we were *weighed down* exceedingly, beyond our power." The adjective John uses ... suggests the idea of something irksome and onerous, a heavy and oppressive burden. The regulations administered by the scribes and Pharisees were characterized by the Savior as "heavy burdens, hard to bear" (Matthew 23:4; Luke 11:46), whereas the Lord said that his yoke was easy and his burden was light (Matthew 11:30). Paul further described the will of God for man under the new covenant as "good, pleasing and perfect" (Romans 12:2). John writes here that his commandments are not grievous. This is true because the all-knowing God ever has in mind our ultimate welfare as well as the highest good for us as his children. The will of God for our lives is not therefore a crushing weight. It is not burdensome, because our lives thrive in the way of his righteousness, whereas

they are thwarted, stunted and confused in the way of unrighteousness. It is not the commandments of God which are **grievous** to the human soul, but rather the flaunting of those commandments. It brings only misery and pain when looked at over a lifetime of experience. When we obey God we are at our happiest and most contented. On the other hand, when we live in disobedience and rebellion against his will, true happiness is a mere illusion for the human family, a fantasy always just beyond the reach of fulfillment.

- Daniel H. King, Sr., *Truth Commentary on the Three Epistles of John*, p. 150

Do You Believe in Heaven?

Many people today affirm that they certainly believe in heaven. Most of these will also say that they believe in God. But in every case, is the God they affirm and the heaven in which they believe the same as what is revealed in the Holy Bible?

In the Bible we are told about heaven, the eternal, holy and glorious habitation where God dwells (cf. Isaiah 63:15; Deuteronomy 26:15). Is this the heaven that people affirm? If it is, then it should follow that the God they believe in is the foremost inhabitant of that "place" (cf. John 14:2-3), having the splendor of royal quality as He rules over all that exists from there.

True believers (the faith that comes from God's word, Romans 10:17) never question God's characteristics: His unlimited power ("the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns." – Revelation 19:6), His infinite knowledge ("intimately acquainted with all my ways." – Psalms 139:1-18), and His eternal nature ("Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." – Psalms 90:2). This God is just and fair ("Righteous and true are Your ways," – Revelation 15:3), and, while good and kind ("He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." – Matthew 5:45), He is also severe and to be feared (Romans 11:22; Hebrews 12:29; 2 Corinthians 5:11). True believers in the God of heaven, in great anticipation of being with Him there, "show gratitude" and "offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;" (Hebrews 12:28).

Believers in heaven understand that there are things they do not know or understand, but their confidence is unshaken. They "walk by faith" (2 Corinthians 5:7). The God of heaven (Genesis 24:7) has demonstrated throughout the Bible, His willingness to reward faithfulness of believers (Joshua 21:43-45). He has made "precious and magnificent promises" (2 Peter 1:4) resulting in the believer's hope, "a hope both sure and steadfast" (Hebrews 6:19).

Believers in heaven have set their determination to reach that goal. They "pay much closer attention" to what God has said to prevent drifting away and "neglect" (Hebrews 2:1-3). "Therefore we do not lose heart, ... while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

Heaven-bound people "keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight." (1 John 3:22). They know it is one thing to confess belief in heaven and quite another to live in such a way so as to go there (cf. James 1:22; 1 John 3:18). True believers bear fruit as Christians (John 15:1-11), manifesting "the fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23; cf. 2 Peter 1:5-7). They do not practice the "deeds of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21); believers "abstain from every form of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Believers in heaven are awaiting a "resurrection on the last day." (John 11:24) – "for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28-29). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10; cf. Matthew 25:31-33). The entire human family will be gathered before Jesus Christ (Matthew 25:31-33; cf. Acts 17:30-31).

Believers in heaven display inconsistency if they do not also believe in hell. The world's great thinkers deny it; society's ignorant adolescents laugh at it. Those inspired of God to reveal His truth to mankind teach it. All mankind will get what they deserve, for God's judgments are "true and righteous" (Revelation 16:6-7). Teachers of God's word gave extraordinarily strong testimony regarding the truthfulness of future punishment for the wicked. Christ revealed that His Judgment Day words will include these sad ones "to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thessalonians 1:8): "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;" (Matthew 25:41). "These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power," (2 Thessalonians 1:9). "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:46).

Friend, do you truly believe in heaven? Are you absolutely certain that you have followed the Lord God's prescription for mercy and forgiveness of all your transgressions that you may live with Him and His people? "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son." (Revelation 21:7). What great joy and satisfaction await the servants of God!

- Gary Smalley

- * "Do not clean out a negative without replacing it with a positive!"
 - * "God allows U-Turns!"
 - * "When a man feels sure he is free from temptation, it's a sure sign he should be on his guard!"
 - * "Giving makes living better!"
 - * "What you learn when you know it all is what counts!"
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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)