

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### Worship or Entertainment?

In our entertainment-oriented culture, many churches find themselves trying to "out do" themselves with more and more elaborate additions to worship. What began as special music by a choir becomes a full orchestra with professional soloists. A dramatic reading necessitates a full Broadway stage production (think *Cirque du Soleil*, seriously). And as long as those who come to worship enjoy what's offered, anything goes. The expectation is that sermons will be shorter, wittier, and more uplifting. Anything in worship that can't be "jazzed up" has to be abandoned as boring — and there's nothing worse than being boring, we're led to believe.

The problem with this entertainment orientation is that the very object of worship is forgotten. God is the "audience" in worship. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that ignorant worship was unacceptable to God, even though it may have been sincere or enjoyable. John 4:24 reveals, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." To worship God in spirit and truth means that worship must be from the heart, not just outward acts, and that it must be done in exact obedience to God's commands. The worship has to be directed to Him — not to the whims of the worshipers.

God's New Testament regulations for worship are neither boring nor out of date. They are God-centered, while entertainment is man-centered.

There's nothing wrong with the worshiper enjoying worship. David said in Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself also in the Lord," and in Psalm 122:1 he added, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'" An unnamed psalmist said, "Give to the Lord the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come into His courts" (96:8). You should enjoy your worship!

However, we often concentrate on worship one dimensionally; i.e. we talk about what we give to God in exaltation, glorification, and adoration. But God intended worship to bless His children. When worship is merely window dressing for an entertainment performance, it won't satisfy God. John warned, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the

doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). Paul condemned worship that as "an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion" (Colossians 2:23). "Self-imposed worship" is worship created after man's desires, and not a "sweet aroma" to God (Exodus 29:18; et al.).

- Adapted from Bob Prichard

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## Worst or Best?

In Ephesians the second chapter, Paul (in just a few verses) shows the worst and best condition in which one can find himself. Consider the following:

"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:11-13).

One is either "in Christ" or not. "Without Christ . . . having no hope . . . without God in the world" - can it get any worse than that? In such a state one is doomed to eternal damnation in the fires of hell. That's exactly where the Ephesians were prior to their conversion.

On the other hand, when one obeys the gospel, is "baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:27), and remains faithful to the Lord (Revelation 2:10) - can it get any better than that? In such a state one looks forward to eternal bliss in the joys of heaven. Thankfully, the Ephesians got there.

Which scenario will it be for us, the worst case or the best? It all hinges on what we do with Jesus. In Christ, or without Christ? The choice is yours. Choose wisely!

- David McPherson

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## *Clippings . . .*

### God Calls Us to Use Our Talents

Through the gospel Christ is calling all of us to yield our talents to His service. He needs godly parents and grandparents devoted to teaching their children God's Word. He needs

men and women to teach Bible classes in local churches. He needs men to serve as elders and deacons, and godly wives to hold up their hands. He needs men who will lead songs, lead prayers, and lead at the Lord's table.

He needs people to scatter the precious seed of His kingdom in a thousand places as our lives come into contact with other people. He needs evangelists to preach among saints and sinners, in local churches and in faraway places. He needs saints to confront sin among His people, to lift up the weary and encourage the discouraged, and "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27). He needs young and old to shine as lights in a world of sin (Matthew 5:14-16).

We today face crucial decisions about the use of our talents: will we give them to God or waste them in selfish sinful conduct?

- Ron Halbrook, Excerpt from an outline on the Faith of Abraham

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## "Believe Also In Me!"

The Lord Jesus sought to reinforce and build upon the strength of faith in His disciples. In John 14:1 He told them, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me." Indispensable for the work of heralding the gospel throughout the world would be the firm foundation of an unshakable faith in the Son of God! Notice from this context the Lord's words which would help them to be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," (1 Corinthians 15:58).

**Jesus is God's Son!** Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16). In John 14:2 Jesus referred to the living God as "My Father"! The Lord God's voice from heaven affirmed Him as "My Chosen One;" inseparable from that is the vital requirement, "listen to Him!" (Luke 9:35).

**Jesus provides for His own!** In John 14:2 Jesus told His disciples: "I go to prepare a place for you." To the faithful God is "a rewarder of those who seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6). For those who abide in Him, bearing much fruit, He promises "rest from their labors," (Revelation 14:13; cf. John 15:1-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Hebrews 4:9-11; Matthew 11:28-29).

**Jesus is coming!** In John 14:3 He is the One who "will come again" (cf. Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). He was put to death on the cross (Philippians 2:8), but God raised Him from the dead (Acts 3:15; 4:10; cf. Romans 1:4) to serve as "a great high priest" (Hebrews 4:14), a "Prince and a Savior" (Acts 5:31), to grant repentance,

dispensing forgiveness, mercy and grace to those in need until the last day, when He becomes "Judge of the living and the dead." (Acts 10:42; cf. Acts 17:31; John 12:48).

**Jesus is the only way to the Father!** In John 14:6 Jesus declared, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." Could there be any stronger terms used to state the exclusiveness of the one avenue leading to eternal life (Matthew 7:14; cf. John 17:2-3).

**Jesus revealed the imprint of His Father!** In John 14:9 Jesus told His disciples: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father". In describing God's Son, Hebrews 1:3 refers to Him as "the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature". Colossians 1:15 refers to Christ as "the image of the invisible God". To know the Son is to know the Father. Jesus spoke the very words the Father gave Him to say (John 12:49) and performed the exact works the Father gave Him to do (John 5:19-30). The Son bears the very stamp of His Father's nature.

**Jesus expressed the complete unity between Himself and the Father!** Twice the Lord said, "I am in the Father and the Father is in Me" (John 14:10-11). Similarly, Jesus could declare, "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30). Jesus spoke the words of the Father and did the works of the Father because the Father was in Him. Jesus did nothing on His own initiative or authority (John 5:30; 7:28-29; 8:28-29, 42; 10:17-18; 12:49-50; cf. John 10:37-38).

**Jesus has the power to answer prayer with action!** In John 14:13 Jesus assured these disciples, "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." What Jesus did to make salvation possible was without question the greatest achievement in the history of mankind. His specially chosen apostles and other believers were to carry the good news, His life-giving message, to the world. In doing so, they would convert countless multitudes, making God's eternal purpose a reality! Their Lord started them on the redemptive trajectory. Forgiveness and fellowship are spread today as their documented work is shared with all who come to believe in Christ.

**Jesus will send the Comforter to benefit His disciples!** He promised His disciples that "the Father . . . will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, . . . He abides with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17). The apostles' vital work of enlarging the kingdom of God throughout the world required divine guidance and strength (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4). Going forward the Holy Spirit would provide the same type of help, comfort, remembrance and revelation that Jesus had provided (cf. John 14:26; 16:13). Preaching the gospel to every creature, capturing the attention of humble listeners and overcoming enemies of truth, was too important to rely on human

strength alone. In the Lord's absence He will send exactly what they needed to perform their great commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16).

Don't these words of Christ strengthen faith and instill confidence in all of His servants?

- Gary Smalley

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\* "The one who lives for this life only will have eternity to regret it!"

\* "No thought is worth thinking that is not the thought of God. No sight is worth seeing unless it is seen through His eyes. No breath is worth breathing without thanks to the One whose very breath it is!"

\* "When we know what's true we can discern what's false!"

\* "The more we understand God's love for us the more love we'll show to others!"

\* "Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" (Psalms 2:11-12).

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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)