

# Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Publication No. 211780

Second Class Postage Paid at Mammoth Spring, AR

Volume 21

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

January 1987

No. 1

## CHURCH DOCTRINE (6)

### What Must I Do After I Become A Member of the Church?

Charles Coats

Once one becomes a member of the church of Christ, he must be made aware that something is still required of him (This should also be done before he becomes a Christian). Too often, people have been converted and then do nothing else. Let us always be alert to the fact that we fall away from God if we do not work to stay with God (cf. 2 Peter 2:20-22; Galatians 5:4).

By studying the Bible, we can see what was required of God's people. Although one might argue that some of these should be done by all people, Christians or not, they should definitely be done by the Christian. Five words give a fairly accurate description of the Christian's duties: STUDY, GROW, TEACH, ABSTAIN, QUIT.

1. STUDY: If anyone is going to learn, he is going to have to study. Since the Bible tells us how to reach heaven, then we need to study it in order to learn God's will (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15).

2. GROW: Part of growth as Christians is brought about by study. However, just as our physical bodies need exercise as well as food, so also our spiritual bodies. We need to start practicing what we are studying (1 Peter 2:1, 2; 2 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Tim. 4:7).

3. TEACH: The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13) teaches us that a circle of teaching must be set up. The Word was taught, and when it

fell on good and honest hearts, these people went forth teaching. God expects His people to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2; Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 5:12).

4. ABSTAIN: Abstain means to "refrain deliberately and often with an effort of self-denial from an action or practice." Thus, if we deny ourselves of something, then we are abstaining from it. Conquering self is probably our toughest battle; yet, as Christians, we must do it (1 Corinthians 9:27; Romans 8:13). We must deny ourselves the "fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11, 12). Christians must not drink, smoke or use tobacco in any form, dance, go to wild parties, frequent bars, engage in pre-marital or extra-marital sex, etc., etc. (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:22).

5. QUIT: Before a person became a Christian, he was a sinner; but now, he must quit his life of sin and live for God. In keeping with the idea of repentance is a "turning from" (Acts 3:19). We were doing certain things, but now, we are "sanctified" (1 Corinthians 6:10, 11). We are to put to death our old life of sin (Col. 3:5).

If you are a Christian, are you doing these things? If you are not a Christian, prepare yourself to do these things. Read Matthew 5:16.

Please give prayerful consideration to the things discussed.

## Sheep Need Shepherds

By Dean Fugett

Several times in the scriptures the people of God are presented under the figure of sheep and their relationship to God and Christ is as sheep to a shepherd (John 10:1-16). The implication of this relationship is that sheep need shepherds. Isaiah said, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way . . ." (Isaiah 53:6). Peter quoted Isaiah in the New Testament passage of 1 Peter 2:25. Sheep left to themselves roam and stray. Since "everyone's business is no one's business," when no one is charged with the business or responsibility of shepherding the flock of God, no one does it, and the flock begins to scatter. In application to the church this means that members drop by the wayside, get spiritually sick, and even die and no one is charged with the business of their care. Thus, the Lord desires and makes provision for shepherds for His flock.

In 1 Peter 5:4 Jesus is referred to as the Chief Shepherd. Under him are shepherds for his sheep. As a flock without shepherds is in danger of straying, falling prey to wolves, and contracting destructive diseases, so a congregation without shepherds (Bishops, Elders, Pastors) is in constant danger of threats to its existence.

The Scriptures clearly set forth that it is the Lord's will that each congregation have its own QUALIFIED shepherds. Please consider the following scriptures:

**The Philippians:** (Philippians 1:1). continued on page 2

**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**

. . . is a monthly publication distributed free of charge to any who care to receive it. We will be happy to add any names to the regular mailing list. If you send in a name be SURE to include the Zip Code number. It must be with each address according to the Postal regulations. This paper is supported by unsolicited contributions for which we are grateful. If you care to know the financial status and expenses, that information will be furnished upon request. Mail all address corrections to:

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS  
P. O. Box 251

Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554

EDITOR . . . . . Charles Coats  
Publication No. 211780

**SHEEP NEED SHEPHERDS**

Continued from page 1

**The Ephesians:** (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 3)

**The Churches of Paul's First Missionary Journey:** (Acts 14:23)

**The Churches of Crete:** (Titus 1:5)

**The Churches of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia:** (1 Peter 5:1 - 4)

**The Churches of the Hebrews:** (Hebrews 13: 7, 17)

**The Church at Jerusalem:** (Acts 15: 2, 4, 6, 22, 23)

We would think that in the face of these scriptures, no one could effectively argue that it is NOT God's will that all congregations of the Lord's people have elders, overseers. In fact, according to the Spirit, congregations without elders have something "wanting" (Titus 1: 5). It must be inferred that when a congregation has qualified men and yet the church has no elders, the church is not pleasing to God! And, if a congregation has been in existence for any extended period of time and still doesn't have men qualified, these men who have failed to qualify themselves spiritually are in a dangerous spiritual condition. Any way one looks at it, every congregation SHOULD have elders. If it doesn't, SOMETHING (or someone) IS LACKING.

In our efforts to follow the God-given pattern for organization as well as the plan for salvation and the order of worship, we must be willing to follow that pattern and

submit to God's will in organization - not only submit, but put forth a concentrated effort to accomplish and maintain God's will in organization or government for His church. This points to three items that are necessary in any congregation for God's will to be implemented:

**A church willing and desiring to submit unreservedly to the Will of God in all matters - worship, work, salvation, organization, and doctrine.** This willingness has always distinguished the Lord's church from denominations. Where denominationalism has always insisted on human creeds and self-gratifying plans of salvation and sensual worship, the church of Christ has sought to follow the will of the Lord and the revealed pattern. But if we fall short on the desire to follow the Lord in any one area, we forfeit our right to claim to be His church. This is why we know that every Christian will want the "whole counsel of God" as it pertains to overseers.

**Men who are qualified or are willing to make the sacrifice and expend the energy to become qualified.** And men who, properly motivated, are willing to become servants of the Lord and his people that they might be leaders and shepherds of God's sheep. The Lord has revealed his qualifications - qualifications each with a purpose. He has not left us in the realm of "think-so." We must be careful to meet God's qualifications, and we must be careful not to expect more than the Lord does in qualifying for shepherds. Just as we would not entrust our children to any unqualified streetwalker for care, neither does God want his children committed to the care of those who will not care for them and keep their best interests at heart. Remember, the hireling will flee when danger threatens while the good shepherd will give his life for the sheep! Men must be willing to give themselves to the work and for the sheep.

**A congregation willing to follow God-given and Spirit approved leaders.** Most of the problems of recent years in the Lord's church can be traced to a mixture of (1) men who were not willing to lead or were not qualified to lead and

(2) congregations of people who were not willing to be led. Let's face it. Some people just refuse to be anything but boss. If they can't run it, they will ruin it. If they can't lead because of some disqualification, they aren't Christian enough to follow the leadership of others who may be qualified. Instead, they cause trouble and keep a church from being scriptural in organization.

If the authority of God is missing from our actions, we cannot qualify as the church of the Lord. If the Lord won't overlook substitutes for baptism, worship, and work, he will not overlook substitutes for available scriptural organization. **Sheep still need shepherds!**

Route 1, Box 95A  
Cave City, AR 72521

## Sheep Need Shepherds (2)

Dean Fugett

I am fully convinced that the major source of trouble in the Lord's church today in inadequate or poor leadership. Even the problems caused by other elements within a congregation could be minimized or prevented by the wisdom and prudent action of good elders. As problems continue to arise to devastate many congregations, the need is going to become even more apparent to more people for well organized **Biblical** training of men for the work of bishops. Dedicated congregations will seek out men and materials true to the Book and God's Purpose, free from the extremes present in the church today that elders can "lord it over the church" keeping finances and programs secret or that elders have NO authority but serve only in the capacity of examples with no decision making power, to teach classes and present workshops not only for prospective elders, but for whole congregations.

**Congregations Need To Be Informed:** We have many in the pews who have come into the church in recent years or of a new generation who have not heard the lessons that

many of us were privileged to hear on scriptural organization and church government. Many congregations have had unnecessary problems due to the lack of understanding of the obligations and qualifications of elders, AND the responsibility of the congregation to these elders. When there is confusion of these responsibilities, there will be confusion within the ranks. An informed congregation will experience less friction in its activities where there is mutual understanding by elders and members of rights and responsibilities, duties and obligations.

**Prospective Elders Need To Be Informed:** Many men have misunderstood the office (work) of bishops. Some have thought the work to be that of "bosses." Others have considered themselves simply as figureheads, examples, with no power or authority without consulting with the whole congregation or calling a business meeting. These misunderstandings have led to conflict, strife and hard feelings. Brethren have been alienated and congregations split. Men who understand what their duty is and the limits of their authority and what is expected of them by God and the congregation will function properly.

**Early Preparation Needs To Be Encouraged:** Dutiful elders do not just "happen." Neither are they those who have been chosen at the last moment from men who suddenly found themselves facing the office of work and put upon to accept that for which they had made no serious and purposeful preparation. No individual should await an emergency before preparing. We each need to begin to prepare early in life for the work in the kingdom of God. I cannot stress enough that congregations and individuals, young men, begin NOW to prepare themselves for scriptural organization. I truly believe that there is greater need now in these perilous times for great elders than there is for preachers. True elders COULD perform the work of preaching the Word in the congregation, but preachers cannot necessarily function as substitutes for the elders. Begin now to prepare to be an elder in the Lord's church.

If men are not prepared for this

work by life and purpose, some ill-informed members of local congregations will suggest that men be placed into the position of leader or "elder" as "the best that we have available." Brethren, "the best we have available" is not good enough if they do not meet the qualifications given by God! We will not accept "sprinkling" as the best availability for baptism. Nor should we ever be content to accept anything less than what God has specified in organization, worship, or work.

Rt. 1, Box 95A  
Cave City, AR 72521

## Lessons From The Geneology of Christ

Jack H. Williams

The book of the generations of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren . . . (Matthew 1:1, 2).

So begins probably one of the least read passages of God's Holy Word. I imagine all of us have been guilty at one time or another of "skipping over" such passages in our studies, "after all, it's just a bunch of 'begats'." Many never realize the wealth of information available to those willing to examine such passages a little closer. Take for example the recorded geneology in Matthew 1:1-17, let's notice a few of the valuable lessons one may learn from this seemingly "uninteresting geneology."

**God's Unswerving Purpose and Promises:** As we notice that the geneology goes from Abraham to Jesus Christ, we have driven home the glorious truth that God's purposes and promises will abide and be fulfilled. Back in Genesis 11 and 12, as we are introduced to Abraham, we find God giving the promise that "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). One could even go further in noting the promise of Genesis 3:15 or even the **eternal purpose** of Ephesians 3:10, 11. But then as you continue to look through the geneology of Mat-

thew 1 we are reminded of instance after instance of man's works that seemingly would thwart the purpose and promise of God. The actions of Tamar and Judah (Gen. 38), David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12) and others. Though these and others brought forth wicked works, God continued His purpose and promise even through them. It is glaringly apparent as one reads the geneology that man cannot make void the promises of God. It is then no wonder that we joyously sing "Standing on the Promises!" What a great and wonderful lesson!

**The Falsity of Premillennialism:** One of the most common false teachings of the denominational world (and even in the church) is the teaching that Christ will return at some future date to establish an earthly throne and reign from Jerusalem. Yet one who studies closely the geneology knows this cannot be so. Note in verse 11 and 12 that Christ has in His lineage "Jechonias." Further study reveals that this "Jechonias" is none other than the "Coniah" of Jeremiah 22:28-30 (same as Jehoiachin, next to the last king of Judah). But note that Jeremiah records in the above mentioned passage that "no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah" (vs. 30). Thus through this geneology, we learn that the supposed reign of Christ of the premillennialists would violate the Word of God, thus it is a false doctrine.

**The Divinity of Christ:** The book of Matthew was written with the Jewish audience in mind, and therefore great emphasis is placed on the fulfillment of prophecy by this one called Jesus. And such is clearly seen in the lineage of Jesus. But there is something else that also testifies as to His divinity. Thirty nine times in Matthew 1 we find the word "begat", but when we come to verse 16, the Jesus birth it is noticeably absent. Why? Remember that the first recorded prophecy of Christ stated that the one who would deliver the death blow to Satan would be of the seed of woman (Genesis 3:15), NOT of man. Also the prophet Isaiah prophesied of the fact that a "virgin shall conceive, and bear a son" (Isa.

**LESSONS . . . OF CHRIST**

continued from page 3

7:14). Thus to the Jewish reader of the first century, and the observant reader of today, it is very significant that it is not said of Jesus that Joseph "begat" him.

"Boring geneologies"? Not at all! There is a wealth of information for those who have the desire to delve into the riches of God's precious Word. May you be one of those.

16015 E. 40th  
Independence, MO 64055

***Drinking From The Saucer***

I've never made a fortune, and I'll never make one now. But it really doesn't matter; cause I'm happy anyhow. I go along my journey, reaping better than I've sowed. I'm drinking from the saucer, cause my cup has overflowed.

I don't have many riches, and sometimes the going's tough - but while my kids still love me, I think I'm rich enough. I'll thank God for His blessings, His mercy bestowed - I'm drinking from the saucer cause my cup has overflowed.

If He'll give me strength and courage, when the road grows steep and rough - I'll not ask for other blessings - I'm already blest enough. May I never be too busy to help bear another's load. I'm drinking from the saucer - cause my cup has overflowed.

\* \* \* \*

*Many a man throws his tongue into high gear before he gets his brain going.*

*If you are not as close to God as you used to be, do not make a mistake about which one has moved.*

*Remember that when you're in the right you can afford to keep your temper and when you're in the wrong you can't afford to lose it.*

*Charity is too often measured by the excess of man's pocketbook instead of the generosity in his heart.*

**THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

**GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION**

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

Mail all address changes to:  
**CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
P. O. BOX 251  
MAMMOTH SPRING, AR 72554