

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

Volume 35

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

May 2001

No. 5

CHRIST'S BLOOD PURCHASED CHURCH

by Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

How the blood of Christ relates to the church He promised to build is one of the most important subjects in Scripture (Matthew 16:13-19). All that we can know about Christ's blood or His church is set forth in God's word (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This is *"the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints"* (Jude 3, ASV). No ideas of mere men can set aside the clear teaching of the Bible regarding the absolute importance of the Lord's church.

There are several prominent errors believed by those who consider the church to be less important than God's word teaches. Some say that the "church age" (as they style it) was unplanned by God, but when the Jews rejected Christ as king, God had to postpone the kingdom and come up with an emergency plan. This idea says we are now in the church age, but Jesus will come back to earth and establish His kingdom. Some say the church is important, but not essential. A large number contend that you should "join a church," but you do not have to be in the church to be "in Christ" and be saved. Most religious people claim that there is no pattern for what the Lord's church should be, that one church is as good as another. In the minds of these people, choosing a church is like going to a large lot where new cars are sold. You just simply look around until you find a car (or church) with all the features that please you and you buy that one. Every one of the errors listed above is contrary to what the Scriptures teach about the church Christ promised to build. Take your own Bible in hand and search the Scriptures with us in this study.

GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN

Premillennialism (hereafter abbreviated as PM) is a false system of teaching which denies the very core of the gospel message, that Christ came to earth to die for the sins of mankind. You will rarely if ever hear those who believe in PM say that they deny Christ came to die for our sins, but that is the logical consequence of their doctrines. The whole system of PM is too complex to treat in this article, but we will study it in future articles. We can, however, tie together several Scriptures, which show that the church was part of God's original purpose in sending Christ to earth.

The apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians is a marvelous treatment on the importance of Christ's church in God's plan. Paul said, *"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Ephesians 3:8-11). Paul said that the church was in the "eternal purpose" of God; therefore it could not be an afterthought or some type of unexpected measure He needed to take. The church exhibits *"the manifold wisdom of God"* because it is the place where God has brought together Jew and Gentile into *"one body by the cross"* (cf. Ephesians 2:11-18). That *"one body"* is Christ's church, over which He is Head (Ephesians

1:21-23). In Christ's church we are *"fellowcitizens"* in the kingdom of Christ (Ephesians 2:19; cf. Colossians 1:13) and members of His *"household"* (family, Ephesians 3:15). Paul said that the *"house of God . . . is the church of the living God"* (1 Timothy 3:15).

When Paul said that *"by the church the manifold wisdom of God"* could be known, he did not mean here that the church was to proclaim God's wisdom by preaching and teaching. The church is to do that, but that is not what Paul intended in this passage. Paul declared that the church itself demonstrated the many aspects of God's wisdom and that this was according to God's *"eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Ephesians 3:10-11). The uniting together of all mankind in the church, removing the separation between Jew and Gentile in Christ's body, is the *"mystery"* of which Paul speaks throughout Ephesians (1:9; 2:11-18; 3:3-5, 9; 5:32, 6:19). How can anyone say that Christ's church, which is His body over which He is Head, was an emergency plan by God and is non-essential to God's plan for saving mankind?

- CHRIST'S BLOOD - PURCHASE PRICE FOR HIS CHURCH

We understand that the value of something is measured by the price paid for it. We are willing to pay a high price for some things because we know we could not obtain them in any other way. The purchase price for the church should indicate its value and importance in God's plan. When the apostle Paul spoke to some elders from the church in Ephesus, he said, *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased*

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

USPS Publication #211780

... is a Periodical publication issued monthly by the Church of Christ at Third and Bethel (P.O. Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.**

FCGN is mailed 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 we must have a complete address, including number and street name, or R.R. or HCR number, plus box number, or a P.O. Box number and the **NINE DIGIT ZIP CODE**. This paper is supported by voluntary contributions for which we are grateful. Financial information will be furnished upon request. **Mail all address corrections or manuscripts to:**

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Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

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**IN CHRIST EQUALS
BEING IN THE CHURCH**

The fact that being "in Christ" equals being "in the church" is missed by multitudes of people professing Christianity. Yet, to deny that fact one has to deny the clear teaching from the Bible presented above. Obviously, one has to be "in Christ" in order to receive "*redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*" (Ephesians 1:7). To be "in Christ" means to be located or positioned in Him. This is a spiritual location and God places us within Christ when we obey the gospel. "In Christ" we have access to "*every spiritual blessing*" (1:3) and we are made a part of His body, the church. It is impossible to be "in Christ" and **not** be "in the church."

Paul said of Christ that the church "*is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*" (1:22-23). If the church is the "*fulness*" of Christ, how could one be in Christ and not be in the church? You could not! Try this experiment and illustrate this for yourself. Take a clear drinking glass and let the glass represent Christ. Then fill the glass about half full of water and let the water represent the church. This is like the popular denominational view of the Lord's church, that the church is only a part of Christ. If this were so, one could be in the church and be in Christ, as represented by the water in the glass; or one could be in Christ but not be in the church, as represented by the unfilled part of the glass. However, now fill the glass completely to the top so that there is no space left. Now the water is "*the fulness*" of the glass, just as the church is the fullness of Christ. Just as there is no room in the glass without being in the water (since the glass is full of water), there is no room to be in Christ without being in the Lord's church, for the church is "*the fulness of him*." "That isn't hard to understand, but many people just do not want to have involvement in the Lord's church in order to be saved and to remain saved.

By the same process that makes one a Christian one is added to the Lord's church. In Acts 2:36-38 those Jews who believed Jesus was made Lord and Christ were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. In verse 47 we are told that those who did so were "*praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" Just as the Lord cleanses us from our sins when we obey the gospel, He adds us to His body, the church. One cannot "join the church" as the denominational religions commonly profess. One must be added to the church (body) of Christ by God by obeying the gospel. No one has the right to require more of you to "join their church" than the Lord does in order for you to become a Christian, for the same process that makes you a Christian adds you to Christ's church.

We are not put "into Christ" by faith alone without further obedience (cf. James 2:24). **Rather, we are baptized into Christ.** "*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also should walk in newness of life*" (Romans 6:3-4). Also, "*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Galatians 3:26-27). Becoming children of God by faith included being baptized into Christ. Further, the apostle Paul shows that being baptized into Christ is the same as being baptized into His body the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). Our salvation in Christ is only possible by His blood. To be in Christ is to be in His body, which is the blood bought church of which He is Saviour (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23, 25).

CONCLUSION

Dear friends and brethren, we do not seek to exalt the place of the Lord's church above that which God purposed. Neither should one

with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The American Standard Version says, "*feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.*" Dear brethren and friends, do you realize that when you say the church is an unimportant or non-essential institution that you are belittling the blood of Christ, the price paid for the church? That is blasphemy of the rankest sort.

Another passage written by Paul teaches the same message. "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*" (Ephesians 5:25). Jesus went to the cross because He "*loved the church, and gave himself for it!*" How dare anyone speak lightly of being a part of Christ's church for which He gave His life. Just two verses earlier the apostle gave another indication of the absolute essential nature of the church when he said, "*Christ is the head of the church; and he is the saviour of the body*" (5:23). Whom does Christ save? Those in "the body." What is the body? The church of which He is the Head. Those saved are those in the church! How then can the church be considered non-essential?

neglect the God-given importance assigned to the church. According to the Scriptures we have studied in this lesson, the church is part of God's eternal plan to save men in Christ. It is God's kingdom on earth and only those who are in Christ's church can claim salvation. Take your Bible and please study these passages in God's word for yourself. If there are matters you would like to study further, we will be happy to arrange a time and place to do so with you.

Praise God for His Son Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who shed His blood to forgive our sins and purchase the church as the body of the saved. Forgiveness from sins and membership in the church are both directly related to Christ's blood. [next month - A Pattern For The Church]



GOD'S POWER TO SAVE

by Bob Winton

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

This is one of the most significant and far-reaching statements in the Bible. Not only does it show the right attitude which every child of God must have toward the word of God, it reveals what the word of God can do. Paul, writing by inspiration, relates his inner attitude toward the gospel: he was not ashamed of it. One who is ashamed of it will be embarrassed or humiliated at it; he will not bring it up in conversation; he will not defend it against its enemies; he will not live it before those who do not respect it. God was not ashamed of Abraham and others (Heb. 11:16). Some were ashamed of the gospel (John 12:42-43; Matt. 26:69ff). Many are ashamed of the gospel today. If one is ashamed of the gospel, he is ashamed of God (who originated it), of Christ (who executed it), and of the Holy Spirit (who revealed it). To be ashamed of the gospel is to forfeit all hope of eternal blessings. "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me

and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

That Paul was not ashamed of the gospel may be seen by his ceaseless efforts to preach it and live it, even under the harshest circumstances and dangers (Gal. 6:14). To dishonor the gospel is to dishonor Christ, and such is unthinkable! He preached the gospel (not current events) to Felix; he emphasized righteousness, temperance and the Judgment, rather than to present pleasures (Acts 24:25). Paul's "suffering all things for the sake of the truth seemed to deprive him of a name and a place among men. Yet his name has lived through nineteen centuries, and now lives as no other name of a human being lives. It will still go down the stream of time, gathering new luster as the centuries pass. It ought to teach all that fidelity to truth and suffering for right is the only way to lasting honor and true renown on earth and eternal glory in heaven" (David Lipscomb).

The gospel is God's power unto salvation. In creating the world, the creative power of God was used; in saving man, his saving power is exercised. Few people believe the gospel is the power God uses to save (Heb. 4:12; Jas. 1:18, 21; Rom. 10:1; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-41,47). The word "the" is not in the original, but that the gospel is God's only means of saving the lost today is evident from the very statement of the verse. But men have concocted theories which place God at odds with his affirmation here made. Men teach that God must send down some mysterious power to convert us; this is said to be through the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit. The mourners' bench was the system by which their theory was put into action. The bench has been dropped in our sophisticated age, but the theory is still held. As Whiteside observed, "It seems, therefore, that it used to take more praying, singing, and shouting to induce God to send down converting power than it does now!"

The gospel is God's power unto salvation, but not without conditions. It can only save those who believe. The verse does not say we are saved by believing only. We can be saved through faith, only when faith leads us to obey (John 1:11-12; 8:30-32, 44; 12:42-43). The Lord saves the obedient believer (2 Thess. 1:7-10). The Lord can save or destroy; our reaction determines which. "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40; cf. Acts 13:44-46).

The gospel is God's power unto salvation to everyone who believes, among the Gentiles and Jews. It was God's arrangement for the gospel to be published among the Jews first; it was they to whom God had given the Law of Moses; it was through their race that the Redeemer was given to the world. But God never intended for the Jews to be the only recipients of the gospel. "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed'" (Gen. 12:1-3; cf. Isa. 2:2-4).

In commenting on this passage, R.L. Whiteside gave the following: "Jesus came to seek and to save the lost; he came not to condemn, but to save. Without the gospel, the whole world was lost. 'The whole world lieth in sin.' The question is frequently asked: 'What will become of the heathen who never heard the gospel?' If a person understood the real purpose and philosophy of the gospel, he would never ask that question. To set such questioners to thinking, we ask: 'What would have become of the same heathen, if there had never been any gospel?' The gospel was designed to save a world already condemned. It is only in a relative sense that people are lost because they do not obey the gospel. Primarily people are lost because

they are sinners. To illustrate: a boat is rushed out to rescue a drowning man. He refuses to be rescued, and is drowned. Now, why did he drown? '0,' some one replies, 'he drowned because he would not get in the boat.' Wrong. The boat had nothing to do with his drowning; he drowned because he was in the water, and he would have drowned just the same had there never been a boat. Of course, his refusing to be rescued made his drowning a case of suicide. Just so with the sinner. The gospel is sent out to rescue the perishing. When the sinner refuses to be rescued, it intensifies his guilt and shows it to be a case of spiritual suicide. But the gospel had nothing to do with his perishing; he would have perished had there never been a gospel. The boat was a means of rescue, and so is the gospel."

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever . . . And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:22-25). [Adapted from author's *Outlined Commentary on Romans*]

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[Editor's Note: Bob Winton has some of the best-outlined commentaries on the Bible available anywhere. Bob has outlined each chapter of the Bible book under consideration and then provided detailed commentary on the Biblical text. The above article is an example of the quality work Bob has produced in about 60 Bible books and special topics. We do not sell books, but try to recommend good books we believe our readers would profit from reading. Contact Bob Winton and ask him to mail you a copy of his catalogue that describes his commentaries, other studies and gives you a price list. You can write to Bob at the address at the end of his article, or e-mail him at bwint38@hotmail.com, or call him toll-free at 1-866-753-8456.

These are some great study tools for Christians desiring to learn more about God's will.]

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An address correction for writing to Bob Spurlin for his book, "Tackling Life Troubles."

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GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

- 1. LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
- 2. PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- 3. SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
- 4. GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- 5. PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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Periodical Postage
Paid At
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Publication #211780