

News & Notes

Sunday, November 5, 2006

Remember in Prayer: Jaunita Akin; Alton Lee Alberson; Sandra Albertson; Michelle Allen; Paul Barrentine; Vikie Cobb; Tyler Curtis; Diane Cox; Sally Etta Crawford; Zach Hopkins; Marylyn Hubbard; Carolyn Jordan; Dot Ketchum; John and Deliah Mann; Helen Miller; Diane Mize; Shirley Ortiz; Lillie Mae Shelby; Calvin Ursery; Charles Womack; Kathleen Womack; Several have had a virus lately;

Pantry item for the month of November is decaffeinated tea bags.

Several changes have been made to our **website**. If you are able, you might want to look at it or tell others about it. The address is www.ashlandcoc.org.

There will be an **elders' meeting** this afternoon at 4:00 PM. If you have anything you would like to bring to their attention, please do so then.

Sunday evening service will now begin at 5:00 PM until otherwise noted.

Sermon In Preview:

AM: Be Men (1Corinthians 16:13-18)

PM: Eating Meats Sacrificed to Idols (1Corinthians 8 and 10)

For the Record (November 5, 2006):

Attendance: 64 Contribution: \$1193.00 Budget: \$1352.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

P. O. Box 25
Ashland, MS 38603-0025

www.ashlandcoc.org

acoc@ashlandcoc.org

Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM

Worship 10:30 AM

Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King
Carrol Street



ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

"I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14)

Are There Christians in Denominations?

Roger D. Campbell

This is a question that deserves our attention. It is one that is frequently asked. Young people ask it. Some of those that have been members of the church for a long time also ask it. Those outside of the Lord's church ask it. We are convinced that when such an inquiry comes forth from a sincere heart that is searching for truth, then it deserves a Bible answer.

Are there Christians in denominations? The correct standard by which we should answer such a question is not our personal feelings, what we have always believed, what we hope is true, or what the majority of people believe on the matter. Like any other question that pertains to spiritual matters, we ought to "*speak as the oracles of God*" (1Peter 4:11) when answering it.

Fact: There were no Christians in denominations in the first century. There were no denominations that existed at that time, so it was impossible for Christians to be members of them. That means, of course, that there is no such thing in the Bible as "a denominational Christian." Humans may use such terminology, but those that do so need to realize that they are not using Bible language when they do.

Fact: All saved people in the Christian era are in the Christ. The Bible speaks of "*the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 3:24) and "*the salvation which is in Christ Jesus*" (2Timothy 2:10). Only those that have obeyed the gospel by being baptized into the Christ have been set free from sin and enjoy newness of life (Romans 6:3, 4, 17, 18). Yes, the saved are in the Christ.

Fact: All saved people are in the kingdom or church of our Lord. But, wait a minute. Did we not just show that saved people are in the Christ? If that be true, then how can it be that saved people are in the kingdom or church? First of all, the Bible says that after the establishment of the church, ". . . *the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*" (Acts 2:47, NKJV). Make no mistake about it: God added saved people to His church, and nothing else. There is not a person alive that can prove from the Bible that the Lord under any circumstances ever added a saved person to a man-made denomination!

Second, the Bible teaches that Jesus "*is the savior of the body*" (Ephesians 5:23). What is the body? Colossians 1:18 identifies it for us: "*And he [Jesus, rdc] is*

the head of the body, the church.” Since the body is the same as the church, when the Bible declares that Jesus is the Savior of the body, that is the same as saying that He is the Savior of the church. Thus, saved people are in His church.

Third, biblically speaking, to be in the Christ and to be in His kingdom/church are one and the same. We learn this from Colossians 1:13, 14. Verse 13 speaks of the saints in Colossae having been translated *into the kingdom* of the Christ. The next verse speaks of them being *in the Christ* and enjoying the forgiveness of sins through Jesus’ blood. Where were those Colossian Christians? According to verse 13, they were in the kingdom or church. According to verse 14, they were in the Son of God. Therefore, to be in the church is the same as being in the Christ. No one can be in the Christ without being in the church (and vice versa).

Fact: In the New Testament, the word “Christian” refers to one that is a member of the Lord’s church. That word “Christian,” which is used a total of three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1Peter 4:16), literally means “a follower of Christ” [*Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, page 672, word no. 5546]. When the word “Christian” appears in the Bible, the immediate and general contexts clearly show that those identified as “Christians” were members of the body of the Christ. Let us see.

Look closely at the message of 1Peter 4:16-5:2, and notice the different words or expressions that refer to the same group of people (all emphasis below is mine, rdc).

Yet if any man suffer as *a Christian*, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at *the house of God*: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of *them that obey not the gospel of God*? 18 And if *the righteous* scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? 19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. 5:1 The elders ... 2 Feed *the flock of God* which is among you ...

In this passage, we see that “a Christian” is one that is in “the house of God.” The “house of God” is the church of the living God (1Timothy 3:15). Our text in 1Peter also shows that Christians are those that have obeyed the gospel, are righteous, and constitute “*the flock of God*,” which is His church (Acts 20:28). Clearly in the Bible, “Christian” was applied to those that were in the family of God, meaning that they were members of the Lord’s church.

Look further at Acts 11:26, where it is written, “. . . *And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*” (emphasis mine, rdc). Which people were called Christians? Disciples. But the word “disciples” in this passage refers to the church. Consider also the fact that Saul of Tarsus had “*made havoc of the church*” (Acts 8:3). Acts 9:1, 2 shows that Saul was persecuting “*the disciples of the Lord*.” Thus, since Saul was only persecuting one group of people, then “*the disciples of the Lord*” and “*the church*” are one and the same. It follows then, because the disciples were in the church, and disciples are called Christians, that Christians were members of the church.

Put another way, “*disciples of the Lord*” were the same ones that were calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 9:1, 13, 14). Those that call on the name of the Lord

are saved (Acts 2:21). So, disciples are saved. But, again, to what does the Lord add the saved? Answer: to His church (Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13, 14). Since disciples are those that have been saved by calling on the name of the Lord, and since disciples are also called Christians, then it follows that Christians are those that have been saved by calling on the Lord’s name. God adds them to His church. Yes, biblically speaking, “Christian” applies to a member of the Lord’s church and no one else.

Fact: If it is possible for a person to be pleasing to God while being a member of any man-made group (i.e. a denomination), then devastating consequences follow:

1. A denomination would be just as good in God’s sight as the church which Jesus bought with His blood. There is no way that any man-made group can be as precious as the church for which the Master shed His blood! (Acts 20:28).
2. It is acceptable to the Almighty to be a part of something that He has not authorized. Denominations are unauthorized by the God of heaven (Matthew 21:25), and thus “*shall be rooted up*” (Matthew 15:13). How could it be acceptable in the Lord’s sight to be a part of, endorse, financially support, and work to build up, something that the Lord Himself will eventually root up?
3. It is acceptable to God to be a part of something that is in competition with the Lord’s church. Mark it down. Whether they realize it or not, and whether they intentionally do it or not, denominations are in competition with the Lord’s church. They would love to see every “non-believer” join them, and they would love to have our members join them as well. Those that oppose the Lord’s church are, in actuality, opposing the Lord (Acts 9:4, 5).

It is time for some closing thoughts. First, is it possible that there are members of the church in denominations? Yes. It is possible that some have truly obeyed the gospel and been added by the Lord to His church, then at a later time, either through ignorance or weakness, joined a denomination. They were members of Christ’s church before ever becoming members of a denomination. Or, it may be the case that one was a member of a denomination, then obeyed the gospel, but later returned to that same denomination or a different one.

It is not possible, however, for one to remain in a denomination and be pleasing in the Lord’s sight. “But denominational members have been baptized. Doesn’t that make them Christians?” According to the Bible, when a person obeys the gospel by being baptized for the remission of sins, the Lord adds that person to His church. If a person becomes a member of a man-made denomination, the Lord has nothing to do with it! Biblically speaking, there is no way that one can be baptized and have that baptism make him both a member of a denomination and the Lord’s church. If I ask a person the question, “When you were baptized, what church did that make you a member of?”, if the answer is “Brand X denomination,” then it is obvious that such is not scriptural baptism. Scriptural baptism makes one a member of God’s church and no other! Let me emphasize one final truth. One does not become a member of Jesus’ church by being baptized into a denominational body, then at some later point praying into the Lord’s church. People do not enter the Lord’s church via prayer: never have, and never will.