



The Voice of Truth



June 28, 2009

The Church Doesn't Matter?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

The prevalent attitude toward the church among religious people for years has been, "Oh, the church is not important. It makes no difference whether one is a member or not. One church is just as good as another. The church is non-essential to man's eternal welfare." If what is meant by these statements concerns man-made churches, then we would agree heartily. Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up," (**Matt. 15:13**). Every last "church" built, named and governed by man is doomed to destruction. Jesus Christ fervently prayed against them all (**Jn. 17:20-21**). In reality Roman Catholicism and Protestantism have no connection at all with one's salvation. However, if some are saying that the Lord's church does not matter, now we got a problem, because I strongly protest. God's Book never has taught the concept that the church of Jesus Christ is a worthless institution, one void of all value. If the church doesn't matter, you are telling me, then:

That The Body Of Christ Doesn't Matter. Christ is the "saviour of the body," (**Eph. 5:23**). Paul teaches that there is one body (**Eph. 4:4**). How many bodies is He the Saviour of? "But now in deed there are many members, yet one body," (**1 Cor. 12:20**). Paul, as we see, has taught time after time the oneness of the body. What is the body? **THE CHURCH!** (**Eph. 1:22-23**). In this passage Paul tells us that the church is the body. In Colossians 1:18 he teaches that the body is the church. So the church is the body and the body is the church. There is only one body; therefore there is only one church. How perfectly this agrees with the promise: "I will build my church" (**Matt. 16:18**). Salvation is found in this one church. This does not mean the church is the Savior. The church is the saved! If the church does not matter, neither does salvation matter which is gra-

ciously conferred within the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. When Paul was persecuting the church (**Acts 9**), he was persecuting Christ (**Acts 9:4**). The church and Christ cannot be separated. The church is important! If the church doesn't matter, then:

You Are Telling Me The Blood Of Christ Doesn't Matter. In his epistle to the Ephesian church Paul said that Jesus "loved the church, and gave himself for it; ..." (**Eph. 5:25**). Christ shed His blood for the church (**Acts 20:28**). How could anyone say the church is not important? The blood of Christ purchased the church. If the church doesn't matter, then the blood of Christ doesn't matter. It is the blood of Christ that made it possible for us to be reconciled back to God (**Rom. 5:10**). We are reconciled unto God in one body (**Eph. 2:16**), which is the church (**Col. 1:18, 24**). Thus, one is saved from his sins, reconciled unto God, when he enters the one body, the church of Christ (**Rom. 16:16**). Who would say that Christ wasted His blood on the cross for a worthless institution? You do if you say the church doesn't matter, that then church is unimportant.

Every Christian, child of God, is a member of the church of Christ. No one can be saved without the blood of Christ (**Heb. 9:22; Eph. 1:7**), and the church of Christ was purchased by the blood of Christ (**Acts 20:28**). Thus, there are no Christians who are not members of the church of Christ. If the church doesn't matter, then:

God's Eternal Plan Doesn't Matter. Who would say this? You do when you say the church is unimportant. The church was not an after-thought on God's part (**Eph. 3:8-11**). It existed in purpose before the world was; it existed in prophecy (**Isa. 2:2-4; Dan. 2:44**). God had His plan of redemption before He made man; the church was and is a central part of it. No other foundation is man permit-

ted to lay (**1 Cor. 3:11**). If the church does not matter, then:

The Lord's Supper Does Not Matter. The Lord's Supper is to be observed in His kingdom (**Lk. 22:29-30**). In **1 Corinthians 11:20-34** the sacred penman taught the brethren at Corinth to observe the Lord's Supper in their church assembly. The church at Troas observed the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7**). This sacred feast was and is to be done in the church of the Lord. God never commanded anyone to partake of His Son's Supper save those in the church and only upon the first day of the week, Sunday. If the church doesn't matter, you're telling me the Lord's Supper doesn't matter. Who would do this? You, if you say the church is not important, one church is just as good as another. If the church doesn't matter, then:

The Gospel Doesn't Matter. The gospel of Christ produces the church of Christ; it is the seed (**Lk. 8:11**). If the gospel had never been preached, then the church never could have existed. The church and the gospel are inseparably linked. If the church doesn't matter, neither does the gospel matter. The gospel is composed of facts that must be believed. We must believe Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, that He died, was buried and rose again for our sins according to the Scriptures (**1 Cor. 15:1-4**). The gospel tells us what we must do to be saved. One must hear God's Word (**Rom. 10:17**); believe it (**Mk. 16:16**); repent (**Lk. 13:3, 5**); confessing Christ is the Son of God (**Rom. 10:9-10**); being baptized for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**) and live a life of continued faithfulness (**Rev. 2:10**). None of these are important if the church doesn't matter. If the church is of no value, neither is the Bible which produces the church. Who would say this?

Does the church really matter to you?

"The Certified Gospel"

By Jarrod Jacobs

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But

*though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (**Gal. 1:6-12**).*

When the apostle Paul wrote the Galatians, he said, *"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (**Gal. 1:11-12**).* What does "certify" mean? "Certify even in older English, is to assure or attest, which is too strong for the phrase, 'to make known or declare.' ... A formula often used by Paul to call attention to what he is about to say." (Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament, Vol. III, p. 87, 38-39). Paul was attesting, or assuring the Galatians of some things about the gospel. Let us study **Galatians 1:6-12**, and see what he was saying about the gospel.

The Certified Gospel Is Not After Man (Gal. 1:11**).**

In other words, the Gospel of Christ did not originate with man. The gospel came from God. Jesus declares the gospel to be God's word (**Jn. 17:17**; **Lk. 8:11**). Some may ask how I can be certain that the Bible came from God, and not the mind of man. It is because of declarations such as the ones found in **II Peter 1:20-21** which say, *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* Paul said, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thor-*

oughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16-17). Any "gospel" that does not originate with God is not the Certified Gospel!

The Certified Gospel Is A God-Pleasing Gospel (Gal. 1:10).

Seeing that the gospel belongs to God, we should please God in the preaching of it! Many today wish to please men in their preaching. The apostle said, "if I do that, I am not the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

Throughout the Bible, it is apparent that God told His people how to please Him, and they were expected to obey. God spoke to Moses and told him that man was not to bow down to any gods, or idols. They were to serve God only (Ex. 20:1-7). In Joshua 1:7-9, God tells Joshua what he must do to be prosperous. Notice please that success came when he was obedient to God, and did not turn away. Solomon said that the whole duty of man is to, "fear God and keep His commandments" (Ecc. 12:13-14).

Turning to the New Testament, we see that God still expects His people to obey Him. In fact, Jesus declares that He obeyed God in all things (Matt. 26:39, 42, 44; Jn. 12:50; Heb. 10:7, 9). The Apostles said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

How can we please God today? We please Him by teaching others the truth about salvation. We must show others that God expects them to hear the words of Jesus (Matt. 17:5), to believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn. 8:32), to repent of their sins (Lk. 13:3), to confess their faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10), and be baptized (Mk. 16:16). Some may not like to hear this, but we are not here to please man! Further, we please God by proclaiming that there is only one true church, that Christ is the head of it, and that it belongs to Him – the church of Christ! (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 16:16; Col. 1:18). Some may not appreciate this truth, but we are not here to please man! We also please God by teaching others what the mission of the church is. The mission of the church is: Evangelism (I Thess. 1:8), Edification (I Cor. 14:26), and Benevolence (Acts 11:27-30). The mission of the church is spiritual in nature, and not

physical (Rom. 14:17). Those who deviate from this plan are not pleasing God, period! Who are you going to please?

The Certified Gospel Is A Revealed Gospel (Gal. 1:12).

Do we remember the definition of the word "certify"? Based upon this definition, we know the apostle Paul was going to make some things "known," or "attest" that certain things were true. In other words, this was a solemn assertion of things that these Christians already knew. They needed to be strong in standing by the things that had been revealed by God (II Tim. 3:16-17).

When we think about the gospel and its importance, we see that God has revealed all the things that we need to know in order to live a God-pleasing life, and go to Heaven when this life is over. This is stated clearly in the apostle Peter's letter to the Christians. There, he wrote, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Pet. 1:2-3). "All things that pertain unto life and godliness" include all the words we need for instruction, learning, developing faith, and discipline in this life! Jude declares, "it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

In other words, today, in 2009, we have all that God intends for us to know about the gospel. He is not revealing any new information to us. The gospel has been revealed in its entirety, and completely furnishes us so that we are prepared for Heaven (II Tim. 3:16-17).

The Certified Gospel Is The Only Gospel (Gal. 1:6-7).

Some try to pervert the gospel, but it does no good. The gospel is still here for all to read, and obey. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). David wrote, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89).

Though man has perverted the truth, man cannot destroy the gospel of Christ. In fact, a perverted gospel only causes the one true gospel to shine even more! The Certified Gospel provides us with something concrete and reliable. In a world that says there is no definite standard of right and wrong, the word of God shows us there is a standard! The word is settled in Heaven (**Psa. 119:89**). The author is not man, but God (**II Pet. 1:20-21**).

A perverted gospel troubles people, it removes people from God. The Certified Gospel gives hope and strength and courage to people. The Certified Gospel provides a plan of salvation. The Certified Gospel shows that only in Jesus is there salvation (**Acts 4:12; Jn. 14:6**). Truly, the Certified Gospel is an invaluable thing! Have you obeyed the Certified Gospel?

The Benefit of Doubt By Jonathan L. Perz

Considering the current moral climate we live in, we are bound to have our doubts about people. Nevertheless, rather than give the benefit of the doubt, that is, suspend our doubts until we have reason to do otherwise, we almost invariably allow our doubt to give way to suspicion, or evil surmising (**1 Tim. 6:4—KJV**). This is seen throughout our daily lives.

On the street, we do not greet an otherwise friendly passerby because of fear and suspicion. In the workplace, we question the motives of our boss based on suspicion, rather than fact. In our homes, suspicion has become our first impulse, rather than love and trust. Amongst brethren in Christ, suspicion runs rampant, and in some cases, has free reign.

When the apostle Paul penned the words, "Love ... believes all things" (**1 Cor. 13:7**), he

was telling us that love gives the benefit of any doubt. Granted, not everyone deserves the benefit of doubt. Paul is not suggesting that love is naïve. Nor is he suggesting that love believes lies (**2 Thess. 2:11; Prov. 26:25**). Christians need not become prey to every hoodwinking, backstabbing, double-crossing snake that slithers into their lives (**Matt. 10:16**). We are not to throw away every ounce of discernment the Lord has blessed us with (**Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Thess. 5:21; Rom. 12:9**).

What Paul is clearly saying is that a Christian's first impulse should be to give the benefit of the doubt. This is love! When all we have are personal doubts about a person, we shine them in the best possible light we can—if and until there is evidence to the contrary. When we doubt one's motives, love judges their motives good until their fruits dictate otherwise. Love says, not every passerby on the street is a hoodlum, therefore, we can be more friendly. Love dictates that trust rule in our homes, rather than suspicion. Love motivates us to think the best of our brethren, before we think the worst.

Jesus plainly says, "By their fruits you shall know them" (**Matt. 7:20**). Until then, we give the benefit of any doubt!

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com