

News and Notes

Please remember the sick both with prayer and with visits. See what we can do to comfort them during their recovery.

Linda Ramsey's mother continues to recover from surgery at home. Larry Ramsey has been ill for about the last ten days or so.

Carol Wyrick is doing better as her recovery continues. There is still a ways to go. Please remember her in your prayers.

Carmelita McCoy, the mother of Carol McLoud is in assisted living and receiving therapy. Her health is not good. Remember her and the McLouds as well.

Terry Czirr is receiving treatments for cancer of the liver. This has been a very emotional time for him and his family. He is the brother of Linda Foster and the son of Mary Czirr.

The Ladies Bible Class will resume Monday, April 20th at 7:00 P.M.

Our Spring Gospel Meeting will be May 10-15 with L.A. Stauffer from Kirkwood, Missouri. Please take as many fliers as you need to spread the news.



April 19, 2009

HOW DO WE KNOW WE ARE THE CHURCH?

By Jim Stauffer

Have you ever wondered how we determined this congregation is an assembly of members of the church that our Lord died to establish?

Jesus said in Mt. 16:18 that based upon the fact that He was the Son of the living God, He would build His church. People in the religious world today look upon that as a reference to the concept of Christianity rather than a statement concerning a specific church He would build.

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

When Jesus spoke of building His church, He spoke of a spiritual organization with no earthly limitations. Anyone in any land who sought it would be able to find it. Those who are born of the water and the spirit as Jesus told Nicodemus could become children of God. (Joh. 3:3-5) He then taught them to worship God in spirit and truth. (Joh. 4:24) He told Pilate His kingdom was not of this world. (Joh. 18:36) Romans 6:1-7 explains the relationship between the new birth and baptism which leads to the reconciliation that comes from being a new creature in Christ. We understand we are not born again physically but spiritually as Jesus taught Nicodemus. Therefore it is our spirit that is born anew and a study of 1 Cor. 15 will help us understand it is our spirit that will be saved in the last day.

THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

What do we mean when we use this term.? Remember, Jesus said He would build His church. (singular) There is only one church in the universal sense. It began on the first day of Pentecost following the resurrection of our Lord in Acts chapter 2. Peter told those people how to become members when he told them to repent and be

Lenexa church of Christ 7845 Cottonwood Lenexa KS 66216 913-631-6519. Evangelist: Jim Stauffer. MEETING TIMES: Sunday - Bible Classes: 9:30AM, Worship Services 10:20AM & 6:00PM, Wednesday - Bible Classes 7:00PM. Send a Copy to a Friend. Map showing location near Cottonwood, Lackman, Mill Creek Elementary School, Pflum, 79th, 87th, 95th Streets, and highways 435 and 35.

baptized for the remission of sins. Later in the chapter we are told those who gladly received the word were baptized and added to the church. The universal church represents all who are saved and is described in passages such as Eph. 1:22,23 where Christ is pictured on His throne in heaven ruling over it. Christ maintains the book of life and all who obey and are fellow laborers of men like the Apostle Paul are found in the book. (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 21:27) This book of life has everyone who has gladly received the word. (Acts 2:41)

THE LOCAL CHURCH

Having come to an understanding of the universal church we recognize it has no local work or activity. The only activity on the part of the church is engaged in by the local congregation of those members of the universal church.

There are several obvious differences in the local and universal church as far as organization and work and worship go.

The universal church does not assemble, but the local church does.

There is only one universal church but many local congregations of the saved.

We are added to the universal church by the Lord when we are saved. (Acts 2:47)

We join the local church of our own volition. (Acts 9:26-28)

Salvation is the basis for being added to the universal church by the Lord.

The judgment of the local leadership is the basis for acceptance into the local church.

Death does not affect membership in the universal church. (Matt. 8:11)

Death ends membership in the local church.

There is no earthly organization of the universal church.

The local church is led by men who have met the biblical qualifications given by Paul to Timothy and Titus.

Thus we are looking for the local group of members of the universal church. We are looking for the collection of saved individuals based on the teaching of scripture. We can recognize that group by observing their organization, worship and work to see if it follows what we are taught in His word.

IDENTIFYING THE LOCAL CHURCH

We must determine if they teach the scripture accurately concerning salvation. Do they recognize we become children of God by faith? (Gal. 3:26; Heb. 11:6)

Do they understand the necessity of repentance prior to forgiveness of sin? (Acts 2:38)

Do they teach oral confession of Christ as Lord and that He was raised from the dead? (Rom. 10:9,10)

Do they teach the necessity of baptism in order to be saved? (Mk. 16:16)

Do they understand the organization of the church as is taught by Paul to Timothy and Titus? Do they recognize the need for qualified elders to oversee and tend the local church (flock) ? Do their elders understand they only have oversight of the flock among them and that they do not have authority to take on responsibilities beyond the local work?

Is their worship conducted in a scriptural manner? Do they sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs as instructed? (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) Do they limit themselves to the specific instruction of the passages and refrain from adding instrumental music and using musical entertainment as worship?

Do they pray with the spirit and understanding? (1 Cor. 14:15)

Do they observe the Lord's Supper at the time and frequency of the New Testament church? (Mt. 26:26-29; Acts 20:7)

Do they give of their means as they are prospered, upon the first day of the week as instructed by the Apostle Paul? (1 Cor. 16:1,2)

Do they preach the whole counsel of God, speaking words of sound doctrine as Paul did and instructed Timothy to do? (Acts 19:9,10; 20:25-27; 1 Tim. 1:5-11)

At the beginning we mentioned recognizing the church that Jesus died for. What should the name of the church be? Obviously we should consider scripture as we have in every other aspect. Should the church be named by or after someone who lived in the 16th or 17th century or should it be named after the One who purchased it with his own blood. (Acts 20:28) The One who has been elevated to reign over it. (Eph. 1:22,23)

DO ITS MEMBERS LIVE AS DISCIPLES OF JESUS

Are they unified in belief and purpose such as Paul taught the Ephesians in Eph. 4:1-6. He said there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all.

Do they lead sanctified lives that are indicative of a commitment to the teachings of Jesus? (1 Th. 4:3-7; 1 Pet. 1:13-16)

Jesus said the world would recognize His disciples by their love for one another. (John 13:34,35) Brethren genuinely caring for each other causes them to see to the needs of one another.

There are many ways we can recognize our Lord's disciples and everyone of them is based upon the teaching of scripture. The common failure in the religious world is not relying on scripture for the authority for their practices. This is what has caused the division in the religious world today. Make no mistake about it, the religious world is divided. They do not believe and practice the same things because all are not relying on God's Word for their authority.