

Rom. 14:19  
So then let  
us follow  
after things  
which make  
for peace,  
and things  
whereby  
we may  
edify one  
another.



John 8:32 And  
ye shall know  
the truth and  
the truth shall  
make you free.

**December  
17  
2017**

## ***THE CHURCH: DESIGNED BY CHRIST***

*by Jim Stauffer*

Last week we spoke of the love Jesus Christ has for the church. In doing so we showed how His love was demonstrated in the most obvious of ways when He died to purchase it.

This week we shall try to have a clearer understanding of just what the church is here on earth.

The Greek word used for church in Scripture is *ekklesia* which means literally, "the called out". **1 Pet. 2:9** gives clarity to this when Peter says, *But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*. This word can have a secular meaning as well to identify any group that is called out for a particular purpose. It is used this way in **Acts 19:31,39,41** when Paul was preaching in the city of Ephesus.

Of course when we speak of the church of Christ, we speak of those who are called out to salvation and are as Peter indicates a people for His own possession.

This term is used to refer to the church in many different settings. For instance it speaks of the church in its universal sense. That is, the church of the Lord is a universal body of those who are saved (**Acts 2:27; Heb. 12:23**). It is used to identify the saints in specific localities such as Corinth (**1 Cor. 1:2**). In this way it can identify the local church both assembled and unassembled. Examples are found in **Acts 8:3** where the church is scattered to avoid the persecution of Saul of Tarsus. In the first Corinthian letter it is often used of the assembly of the saints in that city. Many of those references can be found in **chapters 11 & 14**.

Why is it important to understand all these different ways in which the term is used? For the church to function according to the authority provided in Scripture, it is imperative we recognize the difference between the local church and the universal church.

The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to preach in Antioch in **Acts 11:22**. Later the church in Antioch

sent Saul and Barnabas on their first preaching mission together in **Acts 13**. Paul later preached to those in Ephesus as he worked with the church there as recorded in **Acts 19**. The church in Philippi supported Paul to preach in other cities according to **Philippians chapters 1 and 4**. Never is this charge given to or do we have examples of any organization of the church or work of the church in a universal sense. It is all done in localities by churches in those areas or cities.

This was ensured by the way the New Testament church was organized. There are elders, deacons and, saints who hold neither position in the local churches of the Lord (**Phil. 1:1**). Elders (*bishops and pastors are the same position*) are responsible for the care of the church referred to as the flock of God in **Acts 20:28** and **1 Peter 5:1,2**. This eliminates any need for greater organization and renders such as without the authority of God and Christ.

Much of the error in the religious world today is from the mind of man trying to improve on what God has established and built. We simply must avoid stepping outside the authority of Christ. **2 John 9** says, *Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.*

When we see just who makes up the church and we understand the mission of the church to preach the gospel to the lost, how can we then take into our own hands the planning of such a mission in opposition to the plan already provided in Scripture.

When will the religious world admit they have digressed from what God and Christ have revealed to us through the *holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit* (**Eph. 3:5**).

As we mentioned last week, Christ died for the church. He was resurrected and then ascended into heaven at the right hand of God and given *as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.* (**Eph. 1:22,23**)

## The Gospel of Mark

*"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"* (Mark 1:1). The word gospel is important in Mark's message about Jesus. Gospel (transliterated *euangelion*) means "good tidings" or "good news." How could Mark speak of anything else than good news? The King and His kingdom were coming. Surely, that was/is good news! Preachers today must preach the good news about Jesus. The word *gospel* was not new to Mark or his world. For example, the birth of a great leader was heralded as *good news*; a great leader would do great things; he would change the world in significant ways. With the advent of Christ, has the world ever been the same?

*"As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight'"* (Mark 1:2-3). Using passages from the OT (Isaiah 40; Exodus 23; Malachi 3) Mark makes it clear that the coming of Christ and His kingdom is not a new story; it is a continuation of the same story, the unfolding of God's eternal purpose. John the Baptist's work was anticipatory; the way was made clear for the Savior, the Son of God, to come into the world. Most who comment on Mark's intended audience point to passages such as 4:21, 12:14, 15:15, 5:41, 7:11, and others, as evidence that his message was an appeal to Gentiles. We do well to remember that the Great Commission sent Jesus' disciples into *"all the world."*

Early in Mark's narrative, he tells us something about Jesus. *"Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'"* (Mark 1:11). This affirmation is made twice again (Mark 8:27-30; 9:2ff). The miracles Jesus performed demonstrated His power over the created universe; how could it be otherwise? (Colossians 1:15-16). Jesus' teaching was different—in kind, in manner (Mark 1:27). When Jesus spoke, God was speaking. Yes, we must *"hear ye him."*

Mark often refers to Jesus as *Son of Man* (although the term was used most often by Jesus in referring to Himself). The phrase *Son of Man* has OT roots and NT application. Daniel saw *"One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him ... to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom ... all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him ... His kingdom ... shall not be destroyed"* (Daniel 7:13-14). Peter's acknowledgement of Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ of God, was correct; still, Jesus said that *"the Son of Man"* would soon go to Jerusalem and die. Matthew 25:31 says: *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory."* The allusion

from Daniel points to the end of this age and Christ's final coming.

John the forerunner, prepared the way for the advent of the kingdom, telling people to repent. Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God said: *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel"* (Mark 1:15). Early on, the devil tried to thwart Jesus' mission of salvation. The enemy of all was defeated then and again and finally suffered ultimate defeat when Jesus came forth from the grave. And that is *good news!*

**Randy Harshbarger**

## It's OK to Cry

We are at that time of year when joy abounds. Everyone you meet seems to be in a better mood, unless they're over stressing about Christmas shopping. But there are many others for whom this time of year is a time of great sorrow. They are not 'Scrooges' or the like. It's just that life has thrown them a curve ball about this time of the year in the past, or this is the first holiday without a dear one they've lost in the past year. Most of us have been through this at some point in our life, to one degree or another, and we "muddle our way" through it. We got through it because we realize that it's OK to cry. Those tears show that we care.

Jesus was the greatest example of manhood ever. He showed outstanding moral courage when facing his opponents and tremendous physical courage when facing the cross having done nothing to deserve it but needing to endure for others' sake. Yet, one of the most notable verses about Jesus simply says, *"Jesus wept."* (John 11:35) Read John 11: 1-57. Jesus waited till Lazarus was dead before He came back to Bethany. Both sisters said He could have come earlier and healed him and He didn't deny it. He waited on purpose so that He could say what is recorded in **verse 43**, *"Lazarus, come forth!"* He KNEW that in a few minutes Lazarus would be alive again walking among them but that didn't keep Him from weeping at his tomb. He may as well have wept at mine, or my son Jonathan's. If it was alright for Jesus, God's only begotten Son to cry over something He was shortly to correct then it's OK for you to cry over something you cannot change. It's part of being human.

**Cleveland Reddinger**

## Jump Start # 1996b by Roger Shouse

**Acts 8:2** *"And some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him."*



His name was Wayland. I never got the chance to meet him on this side of life. He was good, faithful and godly. He served with honor as a shepherd for a church in Texas. Those that knew him, loved him. He was one of the good ones. He was leaving the church building Monday, having spent some time with the other two shepherds, discussing the growing church that he helped lead. His truck was T-boned by a drunk. Wayland never made it. The other driver ended up in the yard of the church building. A family lost a husband and a dad, right before the holidays. A church lost an amazing leader. A believer went home to the God he loved and we are left wondering why. Why did the drunk live and the righteous one die? None of this is good, fair nor right. Anger fills the heart, as tears flood our eyes. Even though I never knew him, I knew of him. His name was spoken to me by preachers that loved him. His kind I have seen. Compassionate. Focused. Dedicated. Good to the core.

There are lessons we draw from this. Our verse today, following the death of Stephen, one of God's preachers, is full of parallels. Why did God allow Stephen to die? Why did he have to die that way? Why were those evil Jews allowed to execute a good man? Why are the good ones taken?

In the next few days, devout men will bury Wayland. There will be tears. No one expected this. No one could have seen this coming. It will be hard on many families. It will be hard on a congregation of believers.

First, God always reminds us to be prepared. Death doesn't wait for us to be ready. Death doesn't care how close we are to anniversaries or holidays. Death doesn't care what our passing will do to families or the church. Death doesn't care. We are just a vapor, James tells us. It is appointed unto man to die once, Hebrews tells us. We all would like to live to 95 and be surrounded by generations of family as we make our exit here. It doesn't always happen that way. It wasn't that way for Stephen. It wasn't that way for Wayland. It's not so much how we die, but rather, how have we lived that matters.

Second, poor choices too often hurt good and innocent people. Someone chose to get drunk. He decided to drive. Those wrong, sinful and stupid choices, resulted in the death of a godly man. Innocent children suffer when a mom and dad get a divorce. Wrong choices hurt. They often hurt the innocent. This is not Heaven and it never will be. Our hope is for the world in which there will never be wrong choices. Our hope is in a Savior that saves.

Third, will society ever realize that the nation is a bunch of drunks? We cannot do anything without alcohol. It's a problem, a real problem that no one will touch. A person can't go to the ballgame without a drink. A concert, and there is drinking. A symphony, and there is booze. Weddings, booze. Now, funeral homes in my area are getting liquor licenses. Why? Can't we even have a funeral without drinking? Has drinking done any good for this country? And, more and more, brethren are

saying ignorantly, 'There's nothing wrong with social drinking?' The man who killed Wayland would not have done that had he not been drinking. One drink leads to the next. The TV ads declare, "Drink responsibly." That's like saying, "Curse nicely." Those words do not fit together. To drink is to be irresponsible. It is to be thoughtless to others. It is selfish. And now, because of someone's drinking, a good man has left us.

Fourth, as we know and as we believe, death isn't the end. There is no "The End" to our story. Wayland rests safely in the arms of Jesus. His journey here finished, but he leaves footprints and a legacy of goodness and service. How wrong and how tragic all of this would be if that was it. It's not it. Our journey takes us to the Lord. Two lives intersected last Monday. Both filled with choices. One, chose to walk with the Lord. Forgiven, his character was shaped by the Savior. The other, chose to ignore Jesus. He lived to self. A cross, an empty tomb, the testimony of witnesses, that's all that was needed to fill our hearts with hope and love. The angels carried Lazarus. I expect that the angels carried Stephen. And, I expect that angels carried Wayland.

Fifth, as hard as it is, forgiveness is the banner which we must stand under. As we have been forgiven so we must. Our hope and our desire is for the salvation of the man who drove drunk. We hope he changes. We hope he is baptized. We hope his voice is used to turn family and friends to Jesus. We hope good comes from this enormous tragedy. We hope that this man becomes an obedient worshipper of God. For him to continue on his sinful ways only makes this even worse. What good is adversity if nothing is gained or learned from it?

Sixth, it is our hope that others who know of this tragic story, will look into their own lives. Are each of us ready for today to be our last day? Are there things that need to be done? Do we need to forgive? Do we need to apologize? Do we need to get closer to the Lord? What are we waiting for? This event, signals to all of us, the great importance of today. Today is what we have. Today is a gift. We may not have a tomorrow here. Use it well. Use it in God's honor.

Comfort comes from a God who loves. May friends, family and dear family help at this difficult time. May the church get stronger because of this. May we think more seriously about what is truly important. May we touch lives and make a difference. May we realize the value of leaving spiritual legacies.

Stephen was buried, but we know that he's with the Lord. He's where he wanted to be. We make it our ambition, Paul said, to please the Lord. Wayland, too, is with the Lord, whom he loved and adored.

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***Rev. 21:4 and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.***

**Psa. 1:1** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

## HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

**Visitors welcome**

**We conduct in home Bible Studies**

**We offer Correspondence Courses**

**Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer**

**Elders: Ron Peck and Jim Stauffer**

**Deacons: Bill Miller**

**Brandon Jimison**

**Casey Dent**

**Joe Hurd**

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**Check out the following websites:**

[facebook.com/LenexaChurchofChrist](https://facebook.com/LenexaChurchofChrist)

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### NEWS AND NOTES:

**PLEASE REMEMBER JAN  
PATRICK, STEPHEN KIMKER,  
JIM NEWMAN, JOANN MEYER,  
STEVE WIMP AND LINDIA  
JACKSON**

### BIBLE CLASSES

**SUNDAY - EPHESIANS,  
PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS  
BILL MILLER - TEACHER  
WEDNESDAY**

**ISLAM VS. CHRISTIANITY  
JIM STAUFFER - TEACHER**

**SUNDAY SERMON: GOD'S  
HISTORY IS A PROMISE TODAY**



## What Must I Do To Be Saved?

**Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

**Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30

**Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

**Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

**Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10