

KJV

KING JAMES BIBLE
USED FOR ALL
REFERENCES TO
GOD'S WORD IN
THIS NEWSPAPER

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to battle?" 1 Corinthians 14:8

The Original BAPTIST OBSERVER



"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls..." Jeremiah 6:16

Sounding Out The Faith

October 2015

WHY IS KNOWING HOW IMPORTANT THE CHURCH IS TO GOD,

IMPORTANT TO BAPTIST HISTORY?

Baptist history is almost as compelling as the Bible itself. I say that because there is plenty of Baptist history in the Bible already, up to about 96 A.D. Then we can also look at secular records and proofs. One thing a student of Baptist history will read that is as prevalent as their doctrine, is the sacrifices our forefathers made. Book after book written in record of Baptists and their struggles have been penned by those that support the truth, and by their enemies. What horrific tortures they suffered just because they had an undying faith in the Bible!

Why did so many from the beginning of the Lord's church through the industrial age choose inhumane treatment to maintain their stand? Hebrews 11:32-40 accounts the Old Testament sacrifices that were examples to the people of the first church. Those ancient martyrs for truth would have rather died disgusting and cruel deaths than to renounce their faith. Christ expressed to His church the dangers that were on the way in Matthew 10:16-28. A very daunting proposition for the churches of Christ to exist in, but they did, and those things did happen.

The Apostle Peter in the first church, was preaching along with John in the temple according to Acts chapter 3. Continuing on in Acts 4:1-3, some upper-echelon, religious men actually laid hands on them and became very physical. Later on, that proved to be too little for the blood-thirsty religious. Acts chapter 5 and verses 17-18, 27-40 explain a great exchange between the false religion and the apostles of God. Their lives were threatened and then the apostles were badly beaten and let go.

Stephen, a brother in Christ and a man of great faith, was preaching to the people in Acts 6 when the high priest and his cronies got involved. Brother Stephen then directed his preaching to them in Acts 7, but at the end of that message, those men were so worked up and angry that they truly picked up rocks and killed Brother Stephen right there. Interesting to note a young man in Acts 7:58, Saul, a witness to the death of Brother Stephen. Acts 8:1-3 shows this same Saul as the one causing havoc in the church, attempting to destroy her. Later on, in Saul's life, after his name was changed to

Paul, he suffered many things as a New Testament church member. Reading in II Corinthians 11:22-33, Brother Paul faced threat of death of men many times, escaping the perils of nature, and ran continually from the authorities. Why did he, so many before him, and countless after him risk their lives? What was it that drove them so hard toward death? Why could they not let go?

How important is the church to God? God died for His church as in Acts 20:28, but it is the passage in Ephesians that really brings the truth to a personal and intimate experience. Ephesians 5:22-33 tells us that in all of God's plan we, His creation, were to be married to Him. (The Father with His wife, the Son with His wife, and the Spirit in all of them) The importance of the church is the whole reason why God created man in the first place. (Isaiah 46:10) I love the promise Christ made in Matthew 26:29 when He gave us a glimpse of things to come for His bride, a dinner table. I Thessalonians 4:17 speaks of a time when we, faithful members of New Testament churches, His bride, will ever be with Jesus. John 14:3 exclaims that where ever Jesus is, we will be with Him.

After knowing exactly how God feels about His church, it gives a window into the heart and soul of the Baptists in history. It is paramount that we know why the old Baptists took a stand and fought the powers of the earth to an imminent death. They knew that their eternal destination was with Jesus their Saviour, Lover of their soul, Best Friend, and Lord! God's love for His bride was manifest in the way the Baptists showed their love back to Him.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness: And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints: And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel."
Ephesians 6:13-19

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

OR MAN-MADE CHURCH?

Jesus began His New Testament church on the seashores of Galilee. He began it with the material (saved, Scripturally baptized people) that John the Baptist had prepared. (Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 23:1-7; Acts 10:34-38; Acts 13:31; Acts 1:15-22)

His New Testament church was fully in place before the day of Pentecost. Jesus appointed officers in His church before the day of Pentecost. (Luke 6:13-16; I Corinthians 12:18) Jesus, Himself, called them a church before Pentecost. (Matthew 18:15-20; 26:26-30; Hebrews 2:12) His New Testament church was authorizing baptism by the authority of Christ through her before Pentecost. (John 4:1-2) They also had a business meeting before Pentecost. (Acts 1:12-26)

Jesus offered Himself a sacrifice to bring salvation. (Luke 19:10; John 3:16-18) He also gave Himself for His New Testament church. (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27)

The New Testament church that Jesus built was a local, visible body. He addressed the commission to His local, visible church. (Matthew 28:16-20; Matthew 26:26-30; Hebrews 2:12) The Greek word for church, *ekklesia*, means called out assembly. The New Testament epistles are all addressed to local, church assemblies or bodies. (I Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:2; I Thessalonians 1:1; I Corinthians 16:9; Romans 16:3-5; Revelation 1:11, 20) His New Testament church is commanded to assemble. (I Corinthians 11:33; Psalm 133:1) How could she assemble if she were scattered all over the world universally?

The Lord's local churches must assemble in order to practice church discipline commanded by God. (Matthew 18:15-17; I Corinthians 5:12-13) The Lord used the analogy of our physical body to help describe the church body. (I Corinthians 12:11-27; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23) Our physical bodies are local, not scattered, so therefore, the Lord's churches are local too.

Continued on page 2

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First Landmark Missionary Baptist Church
421 South 40th Street
Springfield, Oregon 97478

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 178
SALEM, OR

Subscriptions are free.

However, there is a significant cost for printing and distribution. Any offerings will be greatly appreciated. Please pray for this ministry and consider partaking with us in this ministry by sending an offering to help publish the truth of God's Word.

Contact Springfield FLMBC by mail, or phone 541-747-3549.

Published by:
Albany Missionary Baptist Church, Albany, OR www.albanymissionarybaptist.org
Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, Reedsport, OR
First Landmark Missionary Baptist Church, Springfield, OR www.flmhc.org
First Missionary Baptist Church of Union Gap, Sutherlin, OR www.uniongapfmbc.com
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NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

OR MAN-MADE CHURCH?

(continued from page 1)

Jesus' New Testament churches have stood since the time He founded the first one almost 2,000 years ago. He guarantees His churches will continue to exist until He returns. (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 3:21; Matthew 28:20; John 14:3) Jesus Christ is the Founder of His church, not man. (Isaiah 28:16; I Corinthians 3:10-12; Ephesians 2:19-21) A simple concept in life is that "like, begets like". The farmer plants corn and he doesn't expect peas. The Lord's churches can only "beget" a church. A man cannot start one of the Lord's churches. (Matthew 7:16-20)

Jesus' local, visible New Testament churches have stood through time. Matthew 16:18 has taken place through church lineage. She began permanently meeting in Jerusalem. Jerusalem beget Samaria. (Acts 8:14-17) Jerusalem beget Caesarea. (Acts 10:44-48) Jerusalem beget Antioch. (Acts 11:19-26) Antioch begets Philippi, Lystra, Corinth, Iconium, Puteoli, Thessalonica, etc. (Acts 13:1-4)

A man-made church is made without authority of God through another church. Acts 18:24-28 shows us an example of this. God was not pleased because Apollos had no authority of God through a local, New Testament church. Acts 19:1-7 and Ephesians 1:1 show us that God had to "re-do" the work of Apollos through the Apostle Paul, who had been sent out by the Antioch Church. God only recognized and approved the work done by Paul and not Apollos.

Any organization called a "church", in order to be the Lord's, must be able to "rattle the chain" back to the Lord's first church He established on the seashores of Galilee. Without the authority of God through one of His true churches, the work is done by some man or group of men and is not recognized by God.

The Pope of Rome, head of the Catholic Church, could not be the head of the Lord's church because Jesus is the Head of His churches. (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18) The doctrines of the Catholic Church are not consistent with those of Jesus. The Catholic religion has developed and morphed over hundreds of years, beginning in about 325 A.D. This began with those that had departed the true faith in 200 A.D. and even further back. (III John)

Martin Luther was founder of the Lutheran Church in 1530 A.D. John Calvin started the Presbyterian Church in 1535 A.D. The Episcopal (English) Church was founded by King Henry III in 1540 A.D. George Fox headed the organization known as the Quakers in 1648 A.D. The Methodist Church had its beginning in 1729 A.D. by John Wesley and his brother, Charles. Alexander Campbell started what is known as the Christian Church and Church of Christ in 1827 A.D. The Mormon religion began in 1830 A.D. by Joseph Smith. Daniel Parker was the founder of the Primitive Baptist Church in 1832 A.D. The Seventh Day Adventist movement had its beginning in 1832 A.D. by William Miller. The Jehovah's Witness movement started in 1884 by "Pastor Russell". Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy started the Christian's Science movement in 1879 A.D. The Pentecostals, Nazarenes, Church of God, Assembly of God, etc. had their origin in America in 1885 A.D.

How about your church? Is it a New Testament church, or a man-made church? Where did it come from? What does it preach, teach, and practice?

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Matthew 16:18

YOU CAN RATTLE THE CHAIN! MATTHEW 16:18 PROVES IT.

The following was the result of many efforts of different individuals spending diligent hours and miles of traveling to find the hidden historical documents that confirm we can "rattle the chain" in church lineage. Matthew 16:18 is all we need to trust by faith that the Lord's churches are still present today. However, many "false prophets and ministers of darkness transformed into ministers of light" have scoffed at the need for church lineage because of inadequate historical documentation. The documentation is not inadequate when you are willing to put forth the effort to find it. Besides, man's historical documents do not override God's Word which demands church succession through church to church lineage.

Lineage of the First Landmark Missionary Baptist Church of Springfield, Oregon

The First Landmark Missionary Baptist Church of Springfield, Oregon, was organized on January 9th, 1960, by the authority that came through the Duke Street Missionary Baptist Church, Portland, Oregon.

The Duke Street Missionary Baptist Church later changed its name to the Hillcrest Missionary Baptist Church. In 1962, they moved to Oregon City, Oregon. The Duke Street Missionary Baptist Church was organized on May 30th, 1958, by the authority that came through the Lobster Valley Missionary Baptist Church. Bro. Elmore Harty was the missionary for all three of these works.

The Lobster Valley Missionary Baptist Church of Lobster Valley, Oregon, was organized by the authority that came through the Landmark Missionary Baptist Church of Sacramento, California, in 1957. Bro. Guy S. Martin was the missionary.

The Sacramento Landmark Missionary Baptist Church was organized by the authority that came through the Woodbridge Missionary Baptist Church of Woodbridge, California, in 1952.

The Woodbridge Missionary Baptist Church was organized by the authority that came through the Riverbank Missionary Baptist Church of Riverbank, California, on July 27th, 1950.

The Riverbank Missionary Baptist Church was organized by the authority that came through the First Missionary Baptist Church of Salinas, California, on May 19th, 1940.

The First Missionary Baptist Church of Salinas, California, was organized as the Hebron Heights Missionary Baptist Church by the authority that came through the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church of Caldwell, Idaho, on August 11th, 1935. Bro. R. Y. Blalock was the missionary.

The Antioch Missionary Baptist Church of Caldwell, Idaho, was organized by the authority that came through the Meridian Baptist Church of Meridian, Idaho, on January 30th, 1927.

The Meridian Baptist Church was organized in the spring of 1924 by the authority that came through the Cloverdale Baptist Church in Cloverdale, Oregon. The Cloverdale Baptist Church endorsed Bro. Blalock to Idaho upon him leaving in November of 1923. Letters were granted from the Cloverdale Church for the Meridian Church after its organization. Bro. Blalock continues his correspondence with the Cloverdale Church throughout the 1930's showing his endorsement for missionary work done through the Cloverdale Church.

The Cloverdale Baptist Church was organized as the First Nestucca Bay Baptist Church of Christ on April 10th, 1897, by the authority that came through the Mt. Hebo Baptist Church of Hebo, Oregon.

The Mt. Hebo Baptist Church was organized by the authority that came through the Fairview Baptist Church of Fairview, Oregon, in the spring of 1893. Bro. William Bailey, then pastor of Fairview, led in the organization of Mt. Hebo.

In February, 1891, the First Dallas Baptist Church dismissed several members for the purpose of organizing the church at Fairview.

The First Dallas Baptist Church was organized in 1856 by the authority that came through the La Creole Baptist Church.

The La Creole Baptist Church was organized on July 18th, 1846, by the authority that came through the West Union Baptist Church. In 1845, the West Union Church voted to authorize her pastor, Bro. Vincent Snelling, to baptize and organize churches by the authority coming through that church.

The West Union Baptist Church was organized on May 25th, 1844, with the Missionary Baptists that had traveled on the Oregon Trail. Bro. and Sis. Lenox received letters from the Todd's Creek Baptist Church showing that they had authority to come out to Oregon in order to establish a New Testament church. The Beagles and Henry Sewell also joined in the organization of the church. All these letters were received just a few months after they organized. The Lenox's daughter was saved sometime early in their coming to Oregon. However, she was not baptized and did not join the church until after Bro. Vincent Snelling came to pastor the church almost a year later. Authority of Christ through the church and the Biblical order of Christ's doctrines were very important to Bro. Lenox when you examine his life choices. In fact, on the wagon train coming west, he insisted that the wagon train stop every Sunday for a time in God's Word and rest. Others did not like this idea, but the wagon master told them they needed God's help on this trip and that they would be stopping as Bro. Lenox requested.

The Todd's Creek Baptist Church in Missouri was started in 1837 with authority coming through the Mt. Zion Church in Missouri.

Mt. Zion Church in Missouri was organized by the authority that came through the Providence Church in Warren County, Kentucky. This church was in the Warren Association of Baptist Churches in Kentucky.

The churches of the Warren Association of Baptist Churches came out of the churches of the Philadelphia Association of Churches.

The Philadelphia Association of churches began in 1707. The churches that began fellowshipping together in this association came directly from Wales. Some churches came across as a body, having voted as a church to move to the new land.

Elder H. Roller came directly from Hill Cliffe Baptist Church, Wales, England, to the Philadelphia Association of Churches. There is a founding stone in the cemetery at Hill Cliffe, that the cemetery was founded in 1357. Notice that this well pre-dates the Protestants, once again showing that Baptists are not, nor have they ever been Protestant.

The Hill Cliffe Church was organized by Aaron Arlington, 987. The Lima Piedmont Church ordained Aaron Arlington in 940 and sent him out.

Lima Piedmont was organized b Balcolao, in 812. Balcolao came from the church at Timto, Asia Minor.

Timto Church was organized by Archer Flavin in 738.

Archer Flavin came from the Darethea Church, organized by Andromicus in 671, in Asia Minor.

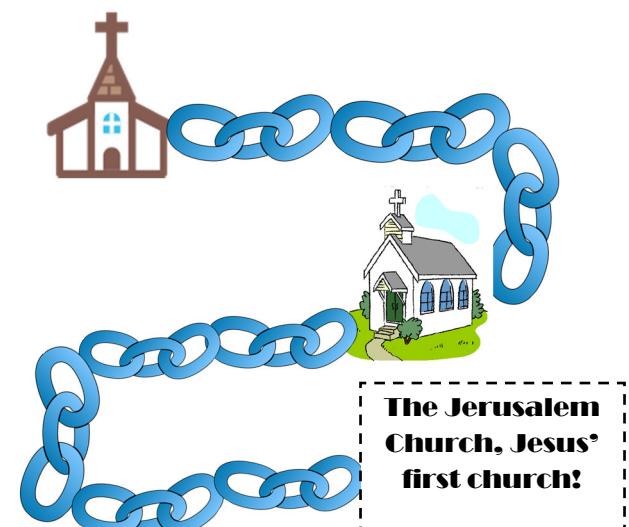
Andromicus came from the Piotifossi Church, at the foot of the Alps in France. Pontifossi Church was organized by Tellestman from Turan, Italy in 398.

Turan Church was organized by Tertullian from Bing Joy, Africa in 237.

Tertullian was a member of the Partus Church at the foot of the Tiber, that was organized by Polycarp in 150.

Polycarp was baptized by John the Beloved on the 25th of December in 95.

John was called out by Jesus on the seashores of Galilee and ordained as Apostle. He worked under the authority of Jesus Christ that came through the Jerusalem Church after they were scattered abroad. (Matthew 4:19-25; Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:8; Acts 8:14-18)



ACTS 19:1-7: WHAT CONSTITUTES SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM

AND DOES THIS QUESTION REALLY MATTER?



Some would argue from this passage that the "re baptism" of these disciples proves that John's baptism was not valid for this dispensation. Others try to argue that this passage does not provide any foundation for rebaptizing individuals. These questions were important to our forefathers and is the very reason our heritage, forsaken by many modern Baptists, was worth dying for, in practice and doctrine.

To begin with, let's take a look at this Biblical passage that has been, and continues to be, a source of contention for many. To understand this passage, several facts should be considered:

- A. At this time, John the Baptist had been dead for over twenty years.
- B. Ephesus was far from Judea, where John's ministry was carried out.
- C. John, while on earth, had received authority from Heaven to baptize. (John 1:6; Mark 11:30) This authority was not passed on to his disciples. Christ and His apostles were baptized by John, and it was Christ Who gave His disciples (His church) authorization to baptize. (John 4:1-2; Matthew 28:18-19)
- D. Some who came under John's ministry did not remain to become disciples of Christ. These men were ignorant of the coming of the Holy Spirit as Comforter and other great truths. (Acts 2)
- E. Some of these men for years afterward attempted to teach others while having a very imperfect understanding themselves. Some even took it upon themselves to baptize as John had.

In this chapter of Acts, Paul came to the great city of Ephesus. Here a ministry was begun that eventually affected all of Asia Minor. (Acts 19:1, 10)

At Ephesus, Paul met certain men who were ignorant, but were previously baptized by someone who professed to be a follower of John the Baptist, evidently Apollos. He was mentioned in chapter 18, and then connected with this incident and these individuals in the opening verse of chapter 19. These men were not so familiar with John, or with the doctrines concerning the Holy Spirit and other matters that he taught concerning the future coming of Jesus and His subsequent ministry of beginning His church. (Matthew 3:11; John 1:26-30) Upon meeting them, Paul seemed to notice that something was lacking in their profession and experience. His inquiries and their answers revealed their ignorance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit as Comforter, and thus their lacking the gifts then being evidenced by others who were church members. Salvation is not the lacking element here, but as we shall see, they lacked Scriptural baptism and the Holy Spirit as Comforter to New Testament church members, as is evidenced by the bestowing of the gifts of speaking in tongues and prophesying. This is the evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in a Scriptural church at this time. (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4; 8:14-17; 10:44—11:17; Revelation 2:5)

All baptism is "unto" someone's doctrine and authority. (I Corinthians 10:2) In baptism, we are identifying with someone and some system of doctrine. Paul, upon hearing their testimony of salvation and lack of knowledge concerning their baptism according to the customs and right ways being correctly practiced and taught during the first century in Scriptural churches, asked them unto what they were baptized. Their ignorance amounted to the same correction and teaching that Aquila and Priscilla provided for Apollos, previously referred to in chapter 18. He taught mightily the gospel of salvation in this same area, but would later be taught and expounded "the way of God more perfectly" by this couple instructing him further in the proper way of baptism and the way of proper service and worship inside a church.

These in chapter 19 that Paul is now conversing with were previously baptized unto the authority and teaching of John, the forerunner of Jesus and the church. They were not claiming to have been personally baptized by John. They knew only of John's preaching and teaching before and preparatory to Jesus starting His church and commissioning them to teach, baptize, and teach. John's baptism was even honored by the Apostle Peter in both Acts 1:22 and Acts 10:37.

Paul then explained to these men that they had been ill-informed. (Acts 19:4) They evidently did not know the purpose of John's baptism. They were ignorant concerning Christ and His ministry.

Paul's reason for baptizing these men was not that John's baptism was invalid. (Acts 19:5) After all, Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, had John's baptism. The original apostles had only John's baptism. None of these were ever "rebaptized". While it is true that the church at that time was in its infancy, there is no good reason to reject John's baptism. To do so is to "unbaptize" all true churches. Jesus, Himself, was baptized by John. These twelve men at Ephesus were rebaptized because:

- A. They had been baptized by an unauthorized administrator.
- B. Baptism is an act of obedience to the truth.
- C. These men did not know the purpose of John's baptism and therefore were not baptized by John himself.

Having been baptized properly and Paul laying hands on them, these men received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 19:6-7) This was an outward proof that the Spirit had come to them as Comforter, evidence that as Paul had also laid hands on them, they became a New Testament church. This follows the same order and pattern that is shown in Acts 8:12-17 in Samaria. There the church was started by Philip first preaching salvation to them, baptizing them with the authority that came through the Jerusalem Church, and then brethren coming from the Jerusalem Church and laying hands on them in a similar manner. Paul does this same work with authority that came through the church in Antioch, which sent him out.

These men at Ephesus finally came to know the truth that John had preached. They followed the Messiah, Whom John had preached, and they received the Spirit as Comforter, evidenced by the tongues and prophecies as the church was started in Ephesus by the ministry of Paul by the authority that came through the Antioch Church.

While special, miraculous evidences of the Spirit as Comforter inside churches today may not be obvious, we should not fail to see the importance of this pattern established in the Scriptures. Baptism without proper authority, and thus without a proper administrator constitutes unscriptural baptism. Churches without proper lineage and authority do not constitute a church that one may give God glory and honor in, or even provide the proper environment for one to truly worship and serve God acceptably. These matters are important, and the Bible provides the patterns and structure for our proper doctrine and practice. Let us always be found rightly dividing and contending, for truly Scriptural baptism as constituted in the New Testament does really matter!



"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
II Timothy 2:15

9/11 AND THE JUSTICE TO COME!

Two towers, two planes—moments later—the sight is insane!

Tremendous explosions on impact—ferocious fire
Toxic black smoke—melting steel and concrete—obliterating victims.

Death and destruction—the towers collapse—America weeps.

As first responders give their all—unspeakable horrors.
The Pentagon—and Shanksville, Pennsylvania—Upon United States soil—a severe judgment befalls us—as a nation!

Supposedly in the name of their "allah"—A spiritual counterfeit!

A false god of very real hate—just another satanic charade!

They chant "Death to the infidels!"—they teach their religion,

The doctrine of devils—with bombs and with bullets.
Serving the master of Hell—when they die—They go to it!

They hail it as a martyrs' death—

While toting their guns—with carefully hooded faces!
Cautious to conceal their true identities—But they leave diabolical traces!

Their actions reek of wickedness—

And their terror has a cowardly stench.

The SAVIOR and the WAY OF PEACE—they know not!
From true Justice, however, they shall never escape!

For the HOLY ONE—WHO sees and knows all—Has prepared a Judgment Day and a Lake—It forever burns with brimstone and fire—And eternal torment shall be HIS desire—Upon all those who revel in their hate—And for anyone rejecting the SAVIOR, the SON!The LORD JESUS of Calvary—there is only ONE!

The Way, the Truth, and the Life is HE—Crucified for sinners—

The RISEN JESUS OF GALILEE!

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of the Medford Missionary Baptist Church of
Medford, Oregon)



MORE IMPORTANTLY, NEVER FORGET JESUS CHRIST IS LORD AND SAVIOR!

A SEASON TO REFLECT!

Silently the autumn chill ventured in

And set the forest ablaze.

Foliage consumed in royal golds, vibrant oranges,
Brilliant yellows, radiant reds, and sun-kissed browns.

Only the INFINITE CREATOR, GOD,
Could make this awe-inspiring array of colors!

And my words absolutely fail

To capture the essence of their beauty.

Yet, He granted us vision

To drink in this seasonal magnificence.

Graciously, GOD gave to mankind
Summer, winter, spring, and fall,

To enhance our enjoyment of,

And to wonder at HIS remarkable planet, Earth!

The gift of four beautiful seasons

Speaks volumes of HIS loving kindness,

And the changing of the leaves in autumn,

Shouts to HIS GREAT GLORY!

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of the Medford Missionary Baptist Church of
Medford, Oregon)

SANCTIFICATION—TWO FOLD

Sanctification is the process of setting apart or being set apart for service or use of God. II Chronicles 7:16 says, "For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there forever: and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually." Here the Lord set apart the temple as His place of dwelling. It was set aside for His name and no other. Leviticus 20:7 says, "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God." This was a sanctification that the children of Israel were to do with their physical lives for God. They were to be set aside for the work of the Lord and were to serve only Him.

Sanctification begins with the work of God. A man cannot sanctify himself unless God first sanctifies him inwardly. All members of the family of God already are sanctified inwardly in Christ Jesus. This happens the very moment a person puts their faith and trust in Christ for salvation. (Hebrews 10:10,14) Believers are sanctified through the blood of Christ. His blood cleanses us from all guiltiness of sin and separates us from the penalty of sin. (Hebrews 13:12) Faith in Christ is the hand that appropriates this. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 26:18) By one offering, Christ has perfected forever those that are sanctified. (Hebrews 2:11; II Thessalonians 2:13)

There is a progressive work of sanctification outwardly as one yields to the inward sanctification done by God at the point of salvation. The outward sanctification is an increasing in love, an abounding more in a Godly walk and in pleasing the Lord, and a growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. (II Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:11-15)

God's Word is how we are sanctified outwardly for God. (I Thessalonians 5:23; John 17:17) Christ sanctified His church when He purchased her with His blood. (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:26) As we study God's Word, it helps us to separate ourselves from sin in our lives. It corrects us and separates us from the world unto God. (John 17:17; John 15:3)

We obtain outward sanctification through presenting our members as servants to righteousness and becoming bond-servants to God. (Romans 6:19; II Corinthians 6:17; 7:1) Following after that inward sanctification through the Word of God will lead us to God's way of service in a New Testament church. (Ephesians 3:21; Acts 2:41-47; Romans 16:27) If one yields to the inward sanctification accomplished by God, then following God's plan for outward sanctification will be successful.

This inward sanctification leads to a complete sanctification one day at the coming of Christ. (I Thessalonians 4: 13-18) If we yield to the inward sanctification and follow the Lord in one of His churches faithfully, then we will receive the full benefit from this two-fold sanctification. We are promised not just to be an heir by salvation by means of the inward sanctification, but joint heirs with Christ by following through with the outward sanctification. (Romans 8:12-23; Romans 6:19; I Thessalonians 3:12-13; 5:23)

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS COMFORTER TO THE LORD'S CHURCHES

In Ephesians 5:18, the Bible tells us to be "filled" with the Holy Spirit. This word means to make replete, filled or well supplied, controlled by. When is a person able to accomplish this? First of all, notice to whom that Scripture was originally written? Yes, it was a New Testament church. Secondly, in Romans chapter 6, those that are saved are commanded to "yield" to God after the inward man. Now we must understand that by just a few Scriptures, Ephesians 3:21, Acts 2:41-47, Acts 20:28, I Timothy 2:4, and many others, that God's desire for those that are saved is that they would serve Him through Jesus in a New Testament church. Having God's order of service understood, it would be impossible to be "controlled" by the Holy Spirit outside of one of the Lord's churches.

Now let's consider if you will, the difference between the Holy Spirit indwelling all believers, and the Holy Spirit's work as Comforter in a local New Testament church. John 20:22 tells us that while Jesus was still on the earth in His glorified body after His resurrection, He breathed on the church the Holy Spirit. Jesus had told His church in John 14:16 that He was going to give them another Comforter after He went away. (John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:7) This other "Comforter" was going to abide with them forever. At this time, Jesus is the Comforter to the church. Another Comforter was coming, according to John 14:17, that they knew but He was coming in a different capacity.

In Acts 2:1-4, we see the Holy Spirit taking up His own office work as Comforter to the church. Before that, the Holy Spirit was fulfilling Jesus' office work as Comforter when He was absent. Remember, they are one, not in person, but in harmony, unity, and work. (John 14:9-12, 16:18) Acts 1:1-8 is when Jesus left His church to return to Heaven. He told them to wait in Jerusalem for a power that the Father would send them. A power to go into all the world to every nation.

In John chapters 14, 15, and 16 Jesus is teaching His church about the Holy Spirit as Comforter that "dwelleth with you and shall be in you". Did they know about the Spirit? Certainly, they were saved and Jesus told us they did in John 14:17. They just were going to experience the Spirit in a new capacity in His own office work as Comforter to the church.

In John 14:25 Jesus tells them He's telling them these things while He is still present with them. In verse 27, He tells them He is leaving them peace. This peace He was speaking of was the reassurance that He (Jesus) would be in our midst when we assemble together. Matthew 18:20 is a promise from Jesus Christ that lets us know all of the things He has commanded are real! They are true! He reassures us through the presence of the Comforter when we meet together because we are in the very, physical presence of God through the Holy Spirit as Comforter.

He also reassures them that they can bear much fruit. Not just a gleaning, but bearing a bumper crop! How is this possible? Through that Acts 1:8 power that was accomplished when the Holy Spirit took up His office work as Comforter in Acts 2:1. Do we really understand the work of the Holy Spirit as Comforter to His local churches? Do we really understand what God has given us access to? This is a power that cannot be matched by any organization or person on this earth. Only the Lord's, true, New Testament churches have this power!

We can have access to the benefits of the power of the Holy Spirit as Comforter at all times in our lives. He promised He would teach us, so when we yield to Him in our daily studies at home, we receive teaching from the Comforter. (John 14:26; I Corinthians 2:10, 16)

However, there is a greater capacity of the Comforter that does take place in the assembly. Acts 4:31 says that in the assembly, the "place was shaken". This shows the demonstration of the power of the Comforter in the assembly. In the Old Testament, we see a type of this when the tabernacle was reared up and God took up His capacity in His house. (Exodus 40:34-38) This is what we can have access to in the assembly of one of the Lord's churches.

Jesus has given His New Testament churches all that we need to do His work. We have His Word that instructs us in righteousness and truth. He has given us the Comforter to give us the power to do the work and to guide and teach us. Now all we need to do is get busy doing the work!

*"Therefore, my beloved brethren,
be ye stedfast, unmoveable,
always abounding in the
work of the Lord,
forasmuch as ye know
that your labour is not
in vain in the Lord."
I Corinthians 15:58*

GOD CAN USE THINGS THAT ARE BROKEN!

God uses most for His glory those that are most broken.

It was the complete breaking down of Jacob's natural strength at Peniel that got him to where God could fill him with His Spirit.

It was by breaking the surface of the rock at Horeb by the stroke of Moses' rod, that let out the cool waters to a thirsty people.

It was when the three hundred elected soldiers under Gideon broke their pitchers, a type of breaking themselves,

that their hidden lights shone forth to the consternation of their enemies.

It was when Esther risked her life and broke through the rigid etiquette of a heathen court that she obtained favor to rescue her people from death.

It was when Jesus took the five loaves and broke them, that they were multiplied, sufficient to feed thousands.

It was when Mary broke her beautiful, alabaster box, rendering it useless, that the perfume filled the whole house.

It is when a grain of corn is broken up in the earth by death, that its germ sprouts forth and bears hundreds more grains.

And thus on and on, through all history, and all biography, and all vegetation, and all spiritual life, God must have broken things. He only accepts broken and contrite hearts.

It was when Jesus allowed His precious body to be broken by thorns and nails and spear, that His life was poured out like a fountain for thirsty sinners to drink and live.

Those who are broken in wealth, broken in self-will, broken in their ambitions, broken in their ideals, broken in worldly reputation, broken in their affections, broken in health; those who are despised and seem utterly helpless and forlorn, the Holy Spirit is gently guiding, ready to use for God's glory. It is the "lame that take the prey", God tells us through the prophet Isaiah. It is the weak that overcome the devil through the work of God by His Son, Jesus Christ.

God is waiting to take hold of our failures and our nothingness so He can shine through them.

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." II CORINTHIANS 12:9