

WHAT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED?

As we read the history of the Jews we find recorded a sad story of unfaithfulness and rebellion to the very One who had chosen them as His special people. As Jeremiah spoke of their turning from God to serve idols he said, *"For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water"* (Jeremiah 2:13). Josiah, the king of Judah at this time, is described as a man *"that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses"* (2 Kings 23:24). Josiah not only loved the Lord, but he also put forth efforts to change the conditions which existed in Judah. He destroyed the altars that had been built for idol worship and slew the priests who served idols (2 Kings 22 and 23). However, the Bible says, *"Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal"* (2 Kings 23:26).

Even though Josiah was a good man and made many changes there was one change he was unable to make. He was unable to change the hearts of the people. All the outward changes, as good as they may have been, could not change the one thing that needed to be changed if the people were to return to God. Surely we can learn a lesson from this.

From time to time I hear brethren talking about changes they think we need to make so that we can be more pleasing to God. Some have suggested that when we assemble to worship we have become cold, formal and indifferent in our worship and that changes need to be made. Some say that the problem is one of being "tradition bound" and that we need to change from "two songs, a prayer and another song" to a different order every time we meet. May I suggest that if the problem does exist and this is the only change made then the only difference now is instead of having a cold, formal indifferent group of people "singing two songs, having a prayer and another song" we now have a cold, formal, indifferent group of people wondering "what are we going to do next?" The change that needs to be made is not in the "order of worship" but in the hearts of men. When we learn to worship God in spirit and in truth our worship will be pleasing to God (John 4:23,24) even if we follow the same "order" every time we meet. If our worship is not from the heart we can make all the outward changes we want to make and it still will not be pleasing to the Lord.

Others say that some are looking upon the church of Christ as a denomination and are using the designation "CHURCH OF CHRIST" as a denominational name. Changes need to be made! What do we change? Some say the sign out front needs to be changed. Rather than identifying the group as a "CHURCH OF CHRIST" let's just put up a sign saying "CHRISTIANS MEET HERE." Brethren, we are changing the wrong thing. If people have a denominational concept of the church changing a sign in front of the building won't solve the problem. Men's hearts must be changed by the teaching and reception of truth. If a church obeys Christ and respects His authority in all things what's wrong with saying they are a church of Christ? If they are "of Christ" there is nothing wrong with so identifying them; if they are not "of Christ" changing the sign out front won't make them so. Yes, I believe there are times changes need to be made, but let us make sure we are seeking to change the right thing.

✍ James Hahn