

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

May 27

2018

Editor's Note: I have observed a trend in recent years that is very disturbing to me. Churches will announce they are having a "Gospel Meeting" but when you attend you hear little or no Gospel. I have attended such meetings and if I had been a non-Christian not knowing what to do to become one I would have left the meeting in the same condition. The following article by John Isaac Edwards deals with this. John will be with us June 10 - 15. We invite all to come. (JH)



“Extending the Lord’s Invitation”

There was a time when you could attend the services of churches of Christ and expect to hear the gospel plan of salvation given and the Lord’s invitation extended. Where have those days gone? Now, it is becoming too common for folks to visit churches of Christ and leave without knowing what to do to be saved and without opportunity given for them to obey the gospel!

1) **An Example Today.** Preaching about ‘A Walk That Pleases God’, a preacher recently closed his sermon this way: “When we get off the path, God doesn’t say, ‘Well too bad, you’re disqualified, you’re out’, but He says, ‘Why don’t you get back on, why don’t you turn away from the wrong you’ve done.’ Come to God, confess that before Him. Ask Him for forgiveness and begin walking again. If we can help you to be right with God, we offer you that, the Lord’s invitation. As we stand, we’ll sing the song.” This could be preached in any human denomination! One would get the impression from hearing this sermon that the forgiveness of sins

comes through prayer, as the plea of the religious world is to ‘pray the sinner’s prayer.’ If this had been preached to the man of Ethiopia, he never would have asked, “...*See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*” (Acts 8:36)! Have we forgotten that preaching Christ includes preaching baptism? (Acts 8:5, 12, 35-38). Ananias said unto Saul, “*And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16).

2) **The Pentecost Model.** We have an excellent model of the kind of preaching that we need to be doing and demanding in the record of Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-40). It was Christ-centered, Scripture-filled, and heart-pricking! Those in the audience cried out, “*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*” (Acts 2:37). Much of the preaching that is done today would not disturb anyone enough to cause them to ask such a question. And they did not leave without knowing they needed to do something and what they needed to do, without it being made clear why they needed to do it, or without opportunity granted for them to do it! “*Then Peter said unto them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost’.... And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this untoward generation.’ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added about three thousand souls*” (Acts 2:38-41).

Christ is “...*the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*” (Hebrews 5:9). Let’s give folks opportunity to obey the Lord and be specific in letting them know what they must do to have their sins forgiven. Otherwise, we are doing those in our audience a real disservice! We need the kind of preaching that calls for men and women to make an immediate decision for the Lord. “...*Who is on the Lord’s side? Let him come unto me....*” (Exodus 32:26) was the call of Moses. The cry of Joshua was, “...*choose you this day whom ye will serve...*” (Joshua 24:15). The exhortation and opportunity to obey should always accompany gospel preaching! Even those who teach error give folks occasion to obey error. Why not present folks with the privilege of “...*obeying the truth...*” (1 Peter 1:22)? The Lord said, “*Come unto me...*” (Matthew 11:28). The book of God closes with the invitation, “*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*” (Revelation 22:17). Let it be heard today!

✍ John Isaac Edwards

CAN WE (OR SHOULD WE) GO BACK TO THE BIBLE?

From time to time in this bulletin we have stressed the need to make sure that we have Bible authority for all we teach and practice. I realize that this thought is not of much concern to many in the religious world as they go along with anything if it pleases and satisfies their own personal desires. However, I am convinced that there are still those with honest and good hearts who can be moved by such an appeal. It is to these we direct the question that serves as the title of this article.

Some think it impossible, and even undesirable, to pattern ourselves after that which we find revealed in the word of God. J. P. Sanders, in an article appearing in the book, *"Voices of Concern,"* states, "Restoration, it seems to me, is not only futile but also undesirable. Why should the church of the twentieth century want to be like the one of the first?" His thought is that it is impossible for the church to exist today as it did in the first century, and even if it were possible it would be undesirable for it to be so. I must disagree with Mr. Sanders on both points.

Jesus tells us that the seed of the kingdom is the word of God (Luke 8:11). The word of God has not changed and it will not change. If we sow the same seed today that was sown in the first century the fruit produced will, of necessity, be the same. When the gospel was proclaimed in the first century, the people heard, and those who believed were obedient to the word. The Bible describes such individuals in the second chapter of the book of Acts. The apostle Peter told those who heard and believed his preaching (v. 37) to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (v. 38). Those who gladly received his word were baptized (v. 41). These were the ones added by the Lord to the church (v. 47). The church of the first century were those who heard and obeyed the word of God and continued in the teaching of Christ (John 8:31,32). To say that the church can not exist today as it did in the first century is to say that men and women today can not hear and obey the word of God. I just do not believe that it is impossible for men and women today to abide

in the teaching of Christ. To say that such is impossible is to deny the word of God.

The next part of the question has to do with the desirability of our following the teaching of God's word. Some, as noted above, say that it would be undesirable for the church today (in the 21st century) to be like the church of the first century, however, Jesus said, *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day"* (John 12:48). If the word is the seed of the kingdom, and if we are going to be judged by the word, then the only conclusion we can reach (if we believe the Bible) is that not only CAN we follow the word of God and be just what those who did so in the first century were, but we MUST do so if we would have any hope of life eternal.

Friends, can you truthfully say that the church of which you are a member is following the teaching of God's word in all it teaches and practices? Can you even read of the church of which you are a member in the Bible? Can you find individuals in the first century wearing the name that you wear in religion? If not, you are not what you should be and you do not have any promise of a home in heaven when this life is over. Why not lay aside all the creeds and commandments of men and simply obey the word of God? Yes, we can (and we should) go "back to the Bible." This is the only way we can be right. ✍ James Hahn

Belleville church of Christ

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Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

James Hahn (317) 745-1507