

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

July 30

2023

Just Christians

In a world filled with denominations, the concept of being *just a Christian* is difficult to communicate. But careful and honest readers of the New Testament find that Jesus did not die so His followers would divide into sects. Jesus died to reconcile all men to God in “one body” (Eph. 2:16). Belonging to Christ, being baptized into the “one body” of which He is Savior, is entirely different than belonging to any of the hundreds of religious bodies in this country (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23).

There Is Only One Body Or Church.

The Bible is very clear. There is only “one body” and “one faith,” just as there is only “one God” and “one Lord” (Eph. 4:4-6). The “one body” is Christ’s church (Eph. 1:22-23), built by Jesus (Mt. 16:18); not men (Heb. 8:1-2). This spiritual house consists of Christians (1 Pet. 2:5), citizens of God’s kingdom (Col. 1:13), saints (Col. 1:2); those born again into God’s family (Jn. 3:5; Eph. 2:19). Christ is the “foundation” upon which His church is built (1 Cor. 3:11); not the sands of denominational creeds or traditions. Jesus is its head (Eph. 1:22) and all authority rests in Him (Mt. 28:18), leaving no room for Popes, Presidents, councils, or conventions. Jesus built His church according to the divine pattern. A house built by any other (Luther, Calvin, Wesley, etc.) is not recognized by the Lord, for “Except Jehovah build the house, they labor in vain that build it” (Ps. 127:1; Mt.

15:13). Jesus condemned the various sects and parties of His day (Mk. 7:6-9, 13) greatly offending them (Mt. 15:12). Does the New Testament’s appeal to be *just a Christian* interest or offend you?

Simply Christians.

When folks complied with the conditions of grace (Acts 2:38-41), “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). To which “church” did the Lord add them? Were they added to the Lutheran Church? Or was it the Baptist Church? Was Peter a member of one denomination and John another? When Saul was baptized (Acts 22:16), did he become an Episcopalian or a Methodist? Are these absurd questions? Certainly, because no one would claim those baptized in Acts 2, or any of the apostles, were anything other than *just Christians!* If they were alive today, no denomination could claim them, for the apostles’ teaching made men and women *Just Christians*; not Protestants or Catholics.

The “Seed” Principal.

Jesus said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up” (Mt. 15:13). To get plants, you must first sow seed. All know if you sow corn seed, you get corn plants; if you sow tomato seed, you get tomato plants. The Bible says the seed producing Christians “is the word of God” (Lk. 8:4-15). Paul’s duty was to go about sowing this seed (1 Cor. 3:5-7). Fair reader, “What did the seed Paul planted produce?” Methodist? Baptist? Catholics? No, it produced *just Christians*, because the seed he planted was the word of God and seed always produces after its kind! Why can we understand this simple and inviolable principal when it comes to tending our farms and gardens, yet so many reject these principals when it comes to God’s word?

Let’s abandon sectarianism, return to the Bible and be *just Christians*.

✍️ Craig Thomas

THE LORD LOVES RIGHTEOUSNESS

Psalm 11 is a short Psalm in which David once again touches on two of the most basic themes in the Psalms: (1) God sees all we do and think, and (2) God accepts the righteous and rejects the unrighteous. When one boils it down to the basics, life is quite simple. God created us to love, glorify, and serve Him (Eccl. 12:13-14; Matt. 22:37; Rev. 4:11). Sin prevents us from doing that. Sadly, man has a penchant for excusing and ignoring sin. But all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Regardless of how morally upright we are by human standards we are "guilty as charged" in God's eyes. Regardless of how "nice a person" we might be, we are lost unless we submit to God's rule in our lives. Salvation can only be found "in Christ" (2 Tim. 2:10). Sin is an abhorrent thing! So abhorrent the sinless Son of God (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22) had to die a cruel, painful, and shameful death to provide a sacrifice sufficient to deal with sin (Heb. 9:14). We can be a "pillar of the community" and receive every human award for our goodness, but without faith in Christ we remain sinners in God's eyes and will spend eternity in hell (2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:11-15).

Man does not establish righteousness with God on his own account. We do not earn salvation. Righteousness with God is offered only through God's grace and can only be accepted through our faith in Christ (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1-2). In Ephesians 2:8-10 the apostle Paul tells us:

"8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

The "faith" of which Paul speaks is not simply a mental process. It requires obedience on our part (Jas. 2:24, 26; Heb. 5:9). Are you trying to be righteous in God's eyes on your own? On our own it cannot be done! It can only be done by being "in Christ" (2 Tim. 2:10).

To get "in Christ" we must hear God's word because that is how we come to have faith in Him (Rom. 10:17). Once we believe Jesus is God's Son we must willingly repent of our sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31) and verbally confess "Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37; Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10). Then we must submit to baptism where we are "baptized into Christ" and "baptized into His death" (Rom. 6:3). Why? Because it was in His death where Christ shed His redeeming blood (Eph 1:7). Only baptism can "wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16) and allow us to "put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26). Then, with God's help, we must strive to grow spiritually and live faithfully (2 Pet. 1:3-11; Rev. 2:10). David closes this Psalm in v. 11:

"For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright."

Do you love God's righteousness or are you still living trying to make it to heaven on your own righteousness?

✍ Craig Thomas

Belleville church of Christ

5635 S County Rd 200E - Belleville, IN - (317) 539-5258

www.bellevillechurch.net

Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	4:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

Brad Phillips (765) 720-2816