

5) *Jesus is the Savior of His body, the church of Christ (Eph. 5:23)*. He gave Himself to die on the cross so she could live (Eph. 5:25). That is how important the church is to Jesus!

How important is the church of Christ to you? (Acts 2:36-42, 47)
(*The Spirit's Sword*; www.bibleanswer.com/2012_Vol_14_No_46_01Jan.htm)

WHO IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN QUAIL VALLEY?

David Halbrook

We thank you for reading our articles from time to time. Maybe some of you are wondering who we are.

We are Christians, meaning each of us belongs to Jesus Christ, having been saved from sin through His blood. We did not invent that name--God called saved people "Christians" (Acts 11:26). In the Bible, God often called a group of Christians the church. He also called them the churches of God, or churches of Christ because they belong to Him (2 Thessalonians 1:4; Romans 16:16). Can you think of a better way to identify God's people?

You might hear someone say that churches of Christ originated in the mid-1800s. Romans 16:16 proves otherwise. The gospel of Christ produced churches of Christ two thousand years ago and will do the same today. We strive to speak and act "as the oracles of God," without adding to or taking from His word (1 Peter 4:11; Revelation 22:18-19). Preaching salvation in Christ by the gospel of Christ—this is who we are at the church of Christ in Quail Valley. For more information, contact us.

-- *Editor's Note*: Find and use our article in the *Arkansas Weekly* this week.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

Church of Christ—Quail Valley
4104 E. Harrison St.
Batesville, AR 72501
Office- (870) 793-6700

Evangelists:
David Halbrook 569-4491
Lenoard Westbrook 612-8409

The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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THE "EVIL" OF ISAIAH 45:7

David Halbrook

Last week's article "Did God Create Evil?" caused a reader to suggest that Isaiah 45:7 be included in this topic. In Isaiah 45:7 God said *I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.* (New King James) The King James version here says "I make peace and create evil," from which some have thought that God created wickedness.

In this verse God teaches by using opposites--"light and darkness" and "peace and calamity" (evil). In this chapter, God spoke to a heathen king, named Cyrus, who only knew idols, so God was "introducing Himself." Jehovah was telling Cyrus that He is the only true God. He made light and darkness—it is all under His control. This same God brings peace (to those who serve Him). Next, what is the opposite of peace? Wickedness? No, righteousness is the opposite of wickedness. Calamity (trouble, evil) is the opposite of peace, and God creates calamity (evil) for all who resist Him. So, the kind of evil which God creates is "calamity," not "wickedness." Evil is a legitimate translation, but it requires that we identify the type of evil intended. God wanted Cyrus to understand this, so that he would obey His instructions.

That calamity is the type of evil of Isaiah 45:7 is also clear from verse eight. Here, God says that He has also made righteousness, but this time the opposite is **not** included, as it was in verse seven. God does not claim to create the opposite of righteousness, which is the type of evil often called wickedness.

Further, notice in verse seven that God is not only talking about the origin of peace and evil (calamity) but also of the present (*I, the LORD, do all these things*). If God created evil (wickedness), then He is STILL creating evil! God cannot be credited with creating evil (wickedness) because He does not tempt anyone with evil, but teaches us how to escape evil (Jam. 1:13; 1 Cor. 10:13). Satan is the father of lies (Jn. 8:44).

Another verse that is similar to Isaiah 45:7 is Romans 11:22. It says, *Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness.* The severity of God is the calamity (evil) of God. Severity and calamity are the consequences of sin (evil) which others have chosen.

If angels and men had always obeyed God, evil would never be a reality, and God would have no need for calamity. But because you have chosen to sin, Jesus Christ is the only way to escape the calamity which the justice of God will execute on the Judgment Day (2 Thess. 1:8-9). Are you ready for that day? If not, learn TODAY how to escape the calamity of sin-- "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)

“CRITICIZE OTHER RELIGIONS?”

Larry Ray Hafley

Is it wrong to criticize other religions? If so, Jesus Christ was “chief of sinners,” for he often criticized the religion of his contemporaries and warned of “many” false prophets who would advocate and propagate numerous false theories (Matt. 15:3-14; 23).

Christians who think it is wrong to criticize other religions have not read the Old Testament, or else they do not believe it. Did Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel think it was undignified to rebuke the doctrines and practices of others? Who sent John the Baptist to criticize and condemn his own generation (Matt. 3:2-12; Jn. 1:6)?

Of course, too much criticism is not good. Children can be destroyed by constant criticism. Marriage partners can kill love, hope, and joy by assaulting one another with abusive words of disapproval. In spiritual matters, one’s faith cannot rest nor be built up in “how wrong they are.” Our faith is not in “how right we are,” but in Him who is altogether right and true (I Cor. 2:5). Knowing this and admitting it does not indicate that it is wrong to criticize another’s religion. Because criticism may be abused does not mean that it is wrong to do it. Food can be misused, but who would say it is wrong to eat?

Often those who protest that it is wrong to criticize another’s religion are those whose religious convictions cannot withstand scrutiny. Since their views and doctrines will not survive careful analysis, they cry “foul,” saying, “it is a sign of bigotry and dogmatic intolerance to criticize one’s religion.” “It’s wrong to criticize” is the last resort of a religious enthusiast whose faith is founded upon the sands of uncertainty, superstition, and self will.

If it is wrong to criticize the religion of another, is it wrong to criticize the religion of one who believes that criticism is good? If it is wrong to criticize, is it wrong to criticize those who criticize? In other words, will those who believe it is wrong to criticize the religion of others dare to criticize this article? If they do, they violate their own creed. If they do not, they are hypocrites for not rebuking and criticizing that which they believe to be wrong.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Joe R. Price

The expression "church of Christ" is a descriptive term of possession. The word church is a collective noun (like "flock" or "family"). The church is composed of saved people (Christians, the "called out" ones, Acts 2:41, 47). "Church of Christ" is used to signify the church that belongs to Christ ("I will build my church", Matt. 16:18). "Church of Christ" is not a denominational title.

We emphatically affirm that the church of Christ is not a denomination. While many promote the advantages of "the church of your choice," Jesus' urgent prayer to the Father was for the unity of His believers - not their division into religious sects (Jno. 17:20-21). Denominationalism is the essence of religious division. We plead for the unity of believers with the truth of Jesus as the basis for that unity (Eph. 4:3-6; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Others would promote the notion that Christ is important, but the church - not so much. Yes, Christ is preeminently important (Col. 1:18). We must also acknowledge the importance of His church; the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18). To diminish the church of Christ is to diminish Christ.

The importance of Christ's church is brought into focus by what the Bible says about the church of Christ:

1) *It belongs to Jesus, not man (Matt. 16:18).* Jesus built it; it is His. Men have constructed rivals to it, but without Christ's approval.

2) *Jesus purchased His church with His blood (Acts 20:28).* This is the value Jesus places on His church, the saved ones.

3) *Jesus is the head of the church of Christ (Col. 1:18).* Since it is His, He exercises supreme authority over it. That is how valuable the church is to Him. We must submit ourselves to His authority in all things (Matt. 28:18-20; Col. 3:17).

4) *The church of Christ is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23).* Who wants to believe for a moment that Christ's body (composed of the saved ones) is insignificant?

(article completed on back)