

Words of

Truth & Reason

Acts 26:25

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CHURCH OF CHRIST—QUAIL VALLEY

John the Baptist

Luke 1 records the unusual events preceding the birth of John, but for now, focus on his adulthood. He began to preach when *the word of God came to John . . . in the wilderness* telling him to *prepare the way of the LORD* by declaring *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, indicating that the words of the prophets were soon to be seen (Lk. 3:2-3; Dan. 2:44). This meant reminding the people of their sin and baptizing all who repented, *for the remission of sins* (Lk. 3:3). Sin was not a popular topic so many people hated his controversial preaching, which Jesus praised (Mt. 11:11ff).

John was arrested, and later murdered, for opposing sinful marriage (Mk. 6:14-29). In prison, he became discouraged and began to wonder whether Jesus really was the One the prophets said was coming (Mt. 11:2-3). Jesus reassured John of the reality and certainty of His power and message.

As John predicted, Jesus was more prominent than he. Later, people who sincerely preached or practiced John’s message were shown *the way of God more accurately* (Acts 18:24-28). Even John’s baptism was replaced by the baptism of Jesus (Acts 19:1-5).

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Lessons From the Life of John

These are just a few lessons we learn from the life of John.

God is seeking lives centered on His goals John sacrificed common luxuries and his life for God’s goals. Whose goals most motivate you in job, home, and leisure decisions?

Hard times bring tough questions It is no coincidence that John became discouraged when in prison. Often, we begin to doubt truths we know when life is hard. Like John, learn that truth does not change just because our circumstances do.

What kingdom was he talking about? Jesus and John preached that the kingdom was near. This kingdom is here today--see Colossians 1:13-14. God moves us into this kingdom when sin is washed away through Jesus’ blood. The kingdom John preached is the church that belongs to Christ. There is no future earthly kingdom—Christ is king today!

John’s work I once asked someone why they were in the Baptist Church since there is no such church in the Bible. I was told that John started the Baptist Church. Does the Bible say so? John was a “preparer” not a founder. John’s death ended his work, but the death of Jesus purchased the church of Jesus. What other church can you learn of in the Bible?

Church Business & Jesus' Gifts

A friend sent me an article about leadership in the church, part of which said faithful elders "will take the church out of the secular education, entertainment and recreation business. Youth activities often siphon funds from the church treasury to support fun and games . . . There is no Bible authority for the church support of such things [citing Colossians 3:17]. It is the work of the home to supply these needs, not the church."

This raises the question—What is the business of the church? Ephesians 4:11-12 says that Jesus gave the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors (elders), and teachers to help saints. Some apostles were fishermen or tentmakers, but their work as apostles was not to equip saints to fish or make tents, to fish or camp together, or to teach others to do these things. With what did they equip and strengthen saints? In verses 13-15, we see it was with the faith, knowledge, and truth. With this, every person, every family, and every church can know what God expects, permits, and forbids.

So what business does God demand, permit, and forbid from the churches? "What is the church's business?" (Eph. 4:11). Ephesians 4-6 shows Jesus' purposes for those gifts is to equip and edify saints with truth so people, families, and churches can do His will.

The websites of many churches of Christ in this area show pictures of Valentine's Day parties, retirement receptions, or seniors' dinners which appear to be hosted by the church. What is the purpose of such occasions? Is it to equip and edify? Did Jesus give evangelists, teachers, or pastors to equip and strengthen the churches to host parties or "trunk or treat"? If so, where is the verse? If not, there is no permission (authority) from God for that, thus He forbids it. God equips and expects the church to do its work and the home to do its work. Did you know there is a difference? Read 1 Timothy 5:1-16 to begin learning the difference. God has not equipped churches to plan or host recreation and parties. If someone has led a church into them, faithful elders (or others) will lead the church out of them and back to the business God gave the church. (*Send us your comments or questions--even if you believe we are wrong.* Galatians 4:16)

Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (Gal. 3:24-25 NKJV)

You are invited to:
Sunday AM Bible classes:
10:00AM
Sunday AM Worship:
10:45AM
Sunday PM Worship:
5:00 PM
Wednesday Bible Classes
& Worship: 7:00 PM

Questions from this issue's articles:

1. What did Jesus say about the preaching of John? Would you like for John to be "your preacher"?
2. What lesson from John's life helps you realize that your life is not so different from his?
3. What is the focus of the workers mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-12?
4. What is the focus of activities such as "trunk or treat" and retirement parties, hosted by a church?

* Mail your answers to the church of Christ in Quail Valley 4104 E. Harrison St, Batesville, AR 72501 OR, e-mail your answers to **TruthAndReason@suddenlink.net**

* If you have a comment or question, call (793-6700; 569-4491) or visit our website **WWW.QVCOC.COM**

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