ONE IN CHRIST JESUS

by Joe Dale Wilson

Wars have been fought and governments have issued laws to bring about peace and harmony between ethnic groups and tribes.

It has not worked real well.

In heaven there are not going to be races and gender differences for we will all be like the angels (Matthew 22:30). God wants us to learn that now! Therefore God has given us a place where such beloved peace and harmony can be found. That place is Jesus Christ!

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both (Jews and Gentiles) one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace" (Ephesians 2:13-15). "And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off (Gentiles) and to those who were near (Jews). For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:17-19).

I cannot change the race or gender into which I was born. Therefore, I cannot become less white as one well-known company once told their employees to be. I can make sure that I have the attitude that Peter learned when he went to Cornelius' house. "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34,35).

All races and both genders are equal in Christ, even as the rich and poor and the educated and uneducated.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

While many in our country seem to have lost touch with reality and are being totally silly, Christians should know that we respect all races and love our neighbors as ourselves.

We need to be sane in a crazy world!
— Seneca, MO

"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12.)

THE LORD LIVES IN THIS OLD HOUSE

by Danny Tunnell

Moses wrote of a normal lifespan being 70 or 80 years, saying "it is soon cut off and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10). Moses, himself, lived 120 years, still hale and hardy, showing you don't have to experience poor health before you die (Deuteronomy 34:7). All that needs to happen is for your spirit to leave your body (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Paul wrote, "It is far better to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). The closer we get to the other side, the better it should look to us. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15).

We are to remember our Creator in the days of our youth, before more difficult days come (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Solomon goes on to mention impairments that may come with aging: losing teeth, poor eyesight, hearing loss, etc. (Ecclesiastes 12:2-5).

A century ago, Harken Frye wrote, "Time has made a change since my childhood days. Many of my friends have gone away. Some I never more in this life will see. Time has made a change in me. In my childhood days I was well and strong. I could climb the hillsides all day long. I am not today what I used to be, because time has made a change in me."

God doesn't have any problem backing up His word. "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen" (2 Corinthians 1:20). He will hasten His word to perform it (Jeremiah 1:12). Like Abraham, we can be fully persuaded that what God has promised He is able to perform (Romans 4:21).

What are some of the promises of God? His benefits include forgiving all our iniquities, healing all our diseases, redeeming our lives from destruction, and renewing our youth like the eagles (Psalm 103:1-5). "For I will restore health unto you, and I will heal your wounds" (Jeremiah 30:17). He will not cast us off in time of old age, nor will He forsake us when our strength fails (Psalm 71:9). The righteous still bring forth fruit in old age (Psalm 92:12-14).

Isaiah writes about those who wait upon (look to) the Lord. Their strength is renewed (refreshed), and "They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Jesus came that we might have life, and have life more abundantly (John 10:10). That applies to every phase of life. Don't water down the word to match your lack of experience. Believe God to elevate your experience to match His word.

Paul talks about our outward man perishing (dying) while our inward man is being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16). "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1).

With these Scriptures in mind, Bill and Gloria Gaither wrote, "If this earthly tabernacle would be dissolved today, I'd trade it for a finer one that would not pass away. But 'til the day arrives when it's time for moving out, it's such sweet peace to know the Lord still lives in this old house. The sweetest fellowship I've known has fortified these walls, and peace has reigned since He's been walking up and down these halls. There's snow upon the rooftop now, and these hinges are near worn out. It's such sweet peace to know the Lord still lives in this old house."
— Miami, OK

Old Paths

Vol. 50, No. 11 November 2026 *"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)*

McGUFFEY'S WARNING

by Dalton Key

From the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, many public schools used the Eclectic Readers, informally known as the McGuffey readers. The following excerpt is taken from one of these books, dated 1854:

"If you can induce a community to doubt the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures; to question the reality and obligations of religion; to hesitate, undecided, whether there be any such thing as virtue or vice; whether there exists any such being as God, you have broken down the barriers of moral virtue, and hoisted the floodgates of morality and crime. I need not say that when a people have once done this, they can no longer exist as a tranquil and happy people. Every bond that holds society together would be ruptured; fraud and treachery would take the place of confidence between man and man; the tribunal would be scenes of bribery and injustice; avarice, perjury, ambition and revenge would walk through the land and render it more like the dwelling of savage beasts than the tranquil abode of civilized and Christianized men. "

Note that these words, nearly 200 years old, were once part of America's classroom curriculum. The fact that such moral and spiritual lessons were taught in public schools, in stark contrast to the absence of such teaching today, is astonishing. Even more striking is how prescient the warning turned out to be.

Read the words again - carefully and thoughtfully. Do you see? Every evil warned against has been wholeheartedly embraced by our nation, and sadly, every consequence foretold is playing out before our tear-filled eyes. Meanwhile, gullible deniers continue to mimic the mistakes of ancient Israel. "Because from the least of them, even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet, even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people, slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:13, 14).

No one (and no nation!) has ever found peace by turning away from God.

The inspired wisdom of Solomon had it right all along and centuries before McGuffey: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

WORST THAN A FOOL

by Joe Slater

Solomon doesn't hold out much hope for fools. Yet two verses in Proverbs say it can get even worse!

1. "Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (Proverbs 26:12). Conceit goes hand-in-hand with sin and disrespect for God's word. "Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil" (3:7).

Conceit also keeps company with laziness. "The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly" (26:16).

Conceit brings God's judgment. Isaiah warned, "Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (Isaiah 5:21). This, along with six other woes, introduced a pronouncement of divine judgment upon the people:

"Therefore, as the fire devours stubble . . . so their root will be as rottenness . . . For all this His anger is not turned away, But His hand is stretched out still" (Isaiah 5:24, 25).

2. "Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (Proverbs 29:20). Sometimes I've wished I had said something rather than remaining silent; but far more often I've wished I had kept my mouth shut! Here is additional wisdom on the subject: "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking. But he who restrains his lips is wise" (Proverbs 10:19).

"He who has knowledge spares his words, And a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive" (Proverbs 17:27, 28). "Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few" (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

Let us remember the words of Jesus: "For every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).

— Springfield, IL

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

by Milton Smith

Ekklesia is the Greek word that is translated into our English word church. It is derived from the very ekkaleo which carries the meaning "to call out." The word, in its simplest form, refers to any "group" of people who might be called forth or assembled together for any particular purpose. Thus, as one reads through the New Testament he will notice that Ekklesia is used in more than one sense.

First, this word is used to refer to an assembly of people in a most general way. For example, we find ekklesia being used to refer to a gathered assembly of citizens (Acts 19:39), Israel as a group of people who were called out of Egypt into the wilderness (Acts 7:38), and, of course, people gathered together for religious worship (Hebrews 2:12). Thus, we find that this word is used in the New Testament in a general sense of a group of people gathered together for any special purpose. But we quickly notice that this word is used to refer to an assembly of Christians in a local area. Thus, we read of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), the church in Antioch (Acts 11:26), the church in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1) , and the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2).

But we notice that this same word is used in the plural to refer to congregations that assembled at different locations. When Paul addressed "the churches of Galatia" (Galatians 1:2), he was referring to congregations that assembled in different areas of Galatia. Likewise, the apostle John was instructed to write to "the seven churches of Asia" in Revelation 1:4; a reference to seven churches located in the region of Asia Minor. But this same word is also used to refer to the collective body of Christ (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). In other words, every Christian in the world belongs to the spiritual body of our Lord. No greater honor can be bestowed upon a person than to belong to this particular body. All Christians should rejoice every day that our Lord has given to us the privilege of belonging to His body, His special "called out people."

— Tulsa, OK

"And He put all things under His feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:22,23).

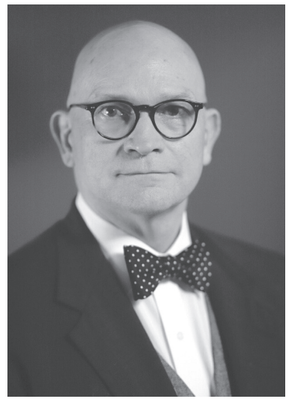
"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9,10).

EDITORIAL . . .

AI OR I AM?

by Dalton Key

We still sing the words. But I wonder if they still mean to us what they used to. "O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder consider all the worlds thy hands have made."



Awesome wonder is becoming a scarce commodity these days. Slick, synthetic, digitally-enhanced imitations of God's power are too often preferred over the real thing.

Divine fact is devalued while human fiction continues to sell at a premium! Moses and Daniel have been replaced by Iron Man and Captain America.

And this blurring of fact and fiction in this current age of AI is only making matters worse.

The Creation account once thrilled and amazed those eager souls who heard it. The miraculous stories of Scripture once filled hearts with wonder. But now? The Bible's fact-based miracles, absent the special effects and CGI/AI wonders of Hollywood and content creators, are made to appear almost lifeless when pitted against the media's imaginary, mock miracles.

A single Bible story told in Bible Class on Sunday morning has little hope of competing for the heart of a wide-eyed child against a relentless, daily dose of super-powered super heroes. I still remember well the question put to me some years ago by my then-five-year-old son: "Daddy, can God do everything Superman can do?"

The problem has only gotten "more so" in the decades since. Today, AI often leaves us wondering: is what I just saw real or artificial? The reality of God's power and creation is becoming blurred by illusions generated by ever-advancing computer systems.

But never forget: the real will always outlast the imaginary. Truth will always win out over time.

This brings to mind a contest of sorts conducted in an Egyptian court back in the days of Moses. Pharaoh's sorcerers feebly attempted to imitate God's miracle of transforming a rod into a serpent. By some means the magicians pulled off a parlor trick, mimicking the marvel. They no doubt considered, at least for the moment, the powers of Pharaoh as greater than the power of God. But smugness soon turned to wonder as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the sorcerers. God was shown to be the true and the only God and the true and only source of genuine miraculous might (Exodus 7:8-12).

Men may mimic God but they will never match Him. We must never, ever forget this. Artificial Intelligence pales in contrast to God's omniscience. When the TV shows have been cancelled and the movies and comic books have long been forgotten; when AI has done its best to do us in, the God of heaven will live on as will His people. There will always and forever be but one I AM!

MY! DOESN'T JESUS HAVE BIG HANDS?!

by Larry Dye

According to a song sung in the 1960's, "He's got the whole world in His hands." Today I think most people jump out of Jesus' hands. They cry, "Too many rules and commandments!"

"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matthew 7:13,14, ESV).

Without Jesus and His word directing us, life is hard to impossible. "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10).

Sometimes the life of a Christian is as hard as the life of the sinner! Christians get fired from their jobs. Christians have to bills to pay. Christians experience illness and stress. Christians die!

All these things that make life hard are common to all mankind; but for the Christian, his faith and trust level the mountains of troubles.

That faith and trust also fills in the valleys of grief.

Christians look not at the storms of life but at the city of gold waiting for them. It takes years of living, trusting, and even falling flat on our faces to develop the assurance that Jesus will raise us up! He will forgive us of sin and give us the strength found in His word.

We have something to hold onto so that we can see the better Day that is coming. Heaven will truly be worth all the suffering this world gives and all the pain we must endure. The power found in the words of Christ will make us conquerors of this world and the devil.

"For He has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5,6).

— Chanute, KS

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

JUST ONE! JUST YOU!

by Flavil Nichols

During the War Between the States a young woman learned the truth and obeyed the gospel. Her sweetheart, J. H. Halbrook, was a confederate soldier. He was captured by the Union Army and kept a prisoner in Michigan until the war was over. He was then given a ticket to Nashville and $2.50. From there he returned to Centerville, Tennessee, found what was left of his home and family, and was reunited with his girlfriend. Then, they were married.

Mr. Halbrooks's new wife studied the Bible with him and he soon became a Christian. He thought the truth was so good and so simple that he began to teach and baptize many of his friends and neighbors. Then he began to preach, but he recognized his need for more training, so he enrolled in Mars Hill Bible School and was taught and trained by

T. B. Larimore.

Upon completing his studies at Mars Hill, Mr. Halbrook and his wife chose to move farther south rather than going back to Tennessee, and they went into the counties of Walker, Marion, Fayette and Lamar counties in Alabama. Among his many converts were Charley Alexander Wheeler and his wife. Mr. Wheeler, after obeying the gospel, soon began preaching to others. He started more than 100 congregations and baptized more than 6000 people.

But wait! The story does not end there! One of those 6000 baptisms was my father, the late Gus Nichols. And under my father's preaching 12,000 people were converted to Christ! And how many of those 12,000 began to preach "the glorious gospel of Christ?" No one can know the exact number, but I personally know several who did.

I am one whom he baptized and encouraged to preach. And under my preaching about 3000 have been baptized. Among that number a few have gone on to preach the gospel.

Only eternity will reveal the total results of the teaching of that one girl over 150 years ago. But at least 21,000 people have already become Christians through this single thread in the fabric of her influence.

"Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37), for you are important! Just one can be very influential. (1919-2018)

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men" (Matthew 5:13).

Old Paths

830 W. Fargo Drive,
Broken Arrow, OK. 74012

On a nonprofit basis.
Published monthly and supported by Churches of Christ and individuals.

Dalton Key Editor

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