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The New Testament Church of Christ and the Christian Church Denomination – “Unity in Diversity” Not According to the Scripture

Today it appears that there are a few brethren among us who are attempting to foster unscriptural unity between the New Testament Church of Christ and the Christian Church.

In reality, this is not a “new ideology” or a “new argument” being espoused by a liberal and digressive faction across our fellowship. Since the division between the Church of Christ and Christian Church in 1906 and in more contemporary times from the late 1950s, the early 1960s, and the 1980s, such dialogue has once again raised its ugly head.

Some have even articulated that there are “Christians in other churches” separate and apart from what we understand to be the “Church Christ.” This was the conversation in Miami, Florida, during April 29-30, 1986, at the “Gold Coast Restoration Forum.”

Several African American Church of Christ preachers at the Forum who biblically denounced this false teaching included the likes of Dr. W. F. Washington, Dr. R. C. Wells, David Shanks, Dr. Eugene Lawton, Dr. James Maxwell, Dr. Jack Evans, Sr., Robert Simmons, James Dennis, and Dr. Nokomis Yeldell.

One of the heretical teachers and leaders for whom this Forum was called also maintained that the use of mechanical instruments of music in New Testament worship is “NOT” a test of fellowship. Secondly, he declared one does “NOT” have to understand that

baptism is for the remission of sins when they are baptized. Third, it was his opinion that all of the saved are “NOT” identified in one group on earth (the Church of Christ), but are scattered throughout various denominations, with all of them being in fellowship with Christ.

Because of the aforementioned statements, it was recommended that the provocateur of this false religious pluralism (which is contrary to New Testament teaching) be withdrawn from immediately with a declaration made to our brotherhood.

In reality, this is not a “new ideology” or a “new argument” being espoused by a liberal and digressive faction across our fellowship.

Dr. Jack Evans, Sr., then-President of Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas, and Dr. James Maxwell, then-Vice President of Southwestern Christian College agreed: “To delay it [the withdrawal of this false teacher] further, we believe, would just give more unrestricted time for him to disseminate false views and subvert the souls of many innocent people.”

The late Dr. Nokomis Yeldell said: “There must be a standard for truth and that is the Word of God. The Word of God is a doctrinal standard by which we can prove something to be right or wrong.”

Unity in Diversity:

Underneath the fallacious illusion of there being “Christians in other

churches” outside of the body of Christ is the distorted concept of “unity in diversity.”

Some have even articulated that there are “Christians in other churches” separate and apart from what we understand to be the Church Christ.

The New Testament Church of Christ cannot be “joined together” scripturally with another religious body. The Christian Church for example is “another body” hence, “another woman” just as the Baptist Church, the Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the Lutheran Church, or any other church.

Based upon the marriage imagery and symbolism found in New Testament Scripture, the Lord Jesus has but “one bride” and this “one bride” is the New Testament Church of Christ. Jesus who is the “Bridegroom,” has sacrificially chosen the New Testament Church to be His “bride” (Eph. 5:25-27). Have some of our preachers today become so “theologically astute” in their studies that they are willing to compromise truth constructed on a premise of “unity in diversity?”

Many religious denominations have created their own ecumenical perception of “unity in diversity.” The fundamental idea is to unite people of widely divergent beliefs by encouraging them to simply “agree to disagree.”

This is a “pseudo-fellowship” thinking that people can share in something they truly do not share. It turns a blind eye to the source of division and it is “NOT” the unity the Bible teaches. The apostle Paul pleaded “...that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).

Those who promoted “unity in diversity” such as Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett argued that we ought to seek to have unity among all brethren while we retain our doctrinal differences. However, this is not the “unity” for which Jesus prayed and it is not the “unity” taught in the New Testament.

The fundamental idea is to unite people of widely divergent beliefs by encouraging them to simply “agree to disagree.”

Truth is truth and error is error by their very natures. The fact that truth and error will remain what they are makes it impossible for the two to be brought together. Unity of the faith must encapsulate the “oneness of belief” based upon what the Word of God authorizes.

Christianity only acknowledges “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5); “one body” and “one Church” (Eph. 4:4; cf. 1:22-23); and only “one faith” therefore rendering the “multiple faiths” we (Continued on page 2)

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see today as being unscriptural. The Bible never speaks of “unity in diversity” in the sense of “interdenominational fellowship.”

The Lord Jesus Christ desires unity among the members of “His” Church and this unity must emanate from the principles of New Testament faith and practice.

When addressing the subject of trying to organize the churches in the Restoration Movement into a denomination and then uniting all denominations into a general body, David Lipscomb said: “...to bring about the conglomeration of denominations into one body, I believe it is the greatest hindrance to unity in Christ possible” (Lipscomb, 1908).

The Mechanical Instrumental Question:

Let it be clearly understood that the *Christian Courier* takes the position that the New Testament Scripture provides the New Testament Church of Christ with everything we need to know about how to worship God in the manner which He has decreed.

This writer also believes that the New Testament is the sole authoritative rule in “all matters” pertinent to faith-based Christian worship in the New Testament Church of Christ.

The question for some who are unfamiliar with the Word of God is: “Does the New Testament support the usage of mechanical instruments of music in New Testament Christian worship?” If not, there should be no dissension as to whether or not it is permissible. If so, where is this practice substantiated in the New Testament? Rhetorically, “Does the New Testament support vocal acapella music in New Testament Christian worship?”

If so, the matter should be uncompromisingly resolved. If not, what method for musical engagement in New Testament Christian worship should be enjoined?

Some will admit today such as John B. Cowden, former editor of

the *Tennessee Christian* and principle promoter for the Christian Church in 1923, that the instrument is “unnecessary to acceptable worship” (Srygley, 1924).

Isaac Errett (1820-1888) a journalist and preacher in the Disciples of Christ from Ohio, also maintained that instruments are unnecessary to carry out singing, but it “should not be made into a test of fellowship” (Errett, 1870).

*To be quite candid,
instruments of music in New
Testament Christian worship is
“sinful.”*

Semantically speaking, the word “unnecessary” can be defined as “undesirable,” “unneeded,” “unessential,” or “unrequired.” In some instances it can be interpreted as something that is “optional.” In this context, the term “unnecessary” is an inaccurate and imprecise description for instrumental music in New Testament worship because there is no “option” to be considered. To be quite candid, instruments of music in New Testament Christian worship is “sinful.” Such abnormality in Christian worship can only be rendered without the *authority* of Jesus and the inspired writers of New Testament dogma.

Any act involving New Testament Christian worship that exceeds, contravenes, or “goes beyond” the Word of God is transgression – it is going beyond the prescribed limit. The law governing New Testament Christian worship is transgressed by any act of worship “not included in it” whether it is burning incense, counting the beads of the rosary, or playing mechanical instruments of music. Reference can be taken from II John 9: “*Whoever transgresses, and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God.*”

The only form of music to be used in Christian worship specified in the New Testament is “singing” (1 Cor. 14:12-15, 26; Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16-17; Heb. 2:10-12; 13:15). We must not “*go beyond what is written*” (1 Cor. 4:6; 1 Pet. 4:11 – NIV). New Testament Christians

are commanded to “sing” and the instrument we worship God with is the heart! Having studied writings of the Patristic Period (men who wrote in the first four centuries after the establishment of the New Testament Church), Dr. Everett Ferguson concluded in his seminal work entitled: *A Cappella Music in the Public Worship of the Church* that mechanical instruments of music were *not* used during this time.

According to Ferguson a former professor of Church History and editor of the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*: “No instrument is found in the New Testament reference, only vocal praise, and thus no New Testament authority for instrumental music is available” (Ferguson, 1999).

He continues by saying: “The conclusion drawn from the New Testament texts and from linguistic evidence was that instrumental music was *not* present in the worship of the New Testament Church. The testimony of early church history is clear and strong that early Christians employed vocal music but did not employ instrumental music in their assemblies” (Ferguson, 1999). Lest the research findings of Dr. Ferguson be rejected because he is a member of the Church of Christ, the same conclusion was drawn by the late Dr. James W. McKinnon in his doctoral dissertation entitled: *The Church Fathers and Musical Instruments*.

Dr. McKinnon was not a member of the Church of Christ; he was a Catholic and professor of musicology at Columbia University in New York City. Absent from any bias and predisposition of intolerance, he did not write his three-hundred eleven page dissertation from the viewpoint of Catholicism; he wrote it from the predilection of a “church historian.” McKinnon stated: “The Fathers of the early Church were virtually unanimous in their hostility toward musical instruments. Early Christian music was vocal and there was a patristic polemic against instruments” (McKinnon, 1965). Nearly all credible Bible scholars agree with the research findings of Dr. McKinnon and Dr. Ferguson.

Semantically speaking, the word “unnecessary” can be defined as “undesirable,” “unneeded,” “unessential,” or “unrequired.” In some instances it can be interpreted as something that is “optional.” In this context, the term “unnecessary” is an inaccurate and imprecise description for instrumental music in New Testament worship because there is no “option” to be considered.

In the landmark publication “*History of the Church through the Ages*” by Robert Brumback, the author quotes Johann Lorenz von Mosheim a German church historian and father of modern ecclesiastical history by saying: “As late as the beginning of the fourth century, the worship of the church still consisted of hymns, prayers, the reading of the scriptures, and the observance of the Lord’s Supper” (Brumback, 2007).

In another disquisition, Mosheim gives virtually the same testimony where he says: “The Christian worship consisted in hymns, prayers, the reading of the scriptures, a discourse addressed to the people, and with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper” (*Ecclesiastical History*. Vol. I, p. 303).

Brumback further states: “The church historians, Eusebius, Mosheim, Neander, and Fisher, referring to this period [Patristic], make no mention of instruments in connection with the services of the church. As apostasy developed, men became dissatisfied with the simplicity of the divine plan and began to change the worship to satisfy their own desires” (Brumback, 2007).

These documented historical facts are significant for at least two reasons. First, the qualitative research was conducted with due diligence in respect to the first four centuries when apostolic approval “could have been given.” Remember, the apostles were in part writers of the (Continued on page 3)

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New Testament Scripture to which we look for authority. Secondly, it places the burden of proof on those who advocate change from the practice of the primitive Church. So again, we refer to the impregnable question previously raised in this overview: "Does the New Testament Scripture support mechanical instruments of music in New Testament Christian worship?" Yes or no?

Some attempt to legitimize using mechanical instruments of music in New Testament Christian worship from the argument of "silence." They say, "The apostles and Jesus did not prohibit it." They also ask: "Where in the New Testament does it say we should 'not' use mechanical instruments of music in New Testament Christian worship?" In addition, "Does the New Testament 'specifically say' in those exact words that mechanical instruments of music are not to be used in New Testament Christian worship?"

The Platonic principle *Qui tacet consentire videtur* (Silence gives consent) may be applicable in matters of social democracy, but the same cannot be said in matters of biblical theology. Such a premium on silence could justify almost anything. The Bible does not have to "specifically" condemn something for it to be wrong.

Faithful Christian living including New Testament worship is based upon hearing and then obeying the inspired the Word of God (Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7). When God specifies what He wants, all unauthorized alternatives are excluded.

The Law of Inclusion and Exclusion:

When God stipulates what He wants man to do and/or how He wants man to do a certain thing, He simultaneously "includes" what He wants and implicitly "excludes" everything in that class. Although the New Testament does not preclude using mechanical instruments of music in worship in those "exact" or similar words, it does not mean that mechanical instruments of music are *authorized* by New Testament Scripture. The Bible embodies both "generic" and "specific" commands. A generic command authorizes the performance of an act without commanding the manner or method of its performance.

The "Great Commission" is a classic archetype of a "generic" and "specific" command. Jesus commanded His disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15 – NIV). The word "Go" is a generic term that does not specify a particular procedure or method of going. On the other hand, the Lord specified what is to be preached when we go – "the gospel."

Qualitative Research Findings by Numerous Church History Scholars Regarding Instrumental Music in Christian Worship:

- **Emil Naumann:** "There can be no doubt that originally the music of the divine service was every where entirely of a vocal nature."
- **Theodore M. Finney:** "The early Christians refused to have anything to do with the instrumental music which they might have inherited from the ancient world."
- **Edward Dickinson:** "While the pagan melodies were always sung to an instrumental accompaniment, the church chant was exclusively vocal."
- **W. D. Killen:** "In the early church the whole congregation joined in the singing, but instrumental music did not accompany the praise."
- **John Price:** "The early Church Fathers were unanimous and vehement in condemning musical instruments in the worship of the church."
- **John L. Girardeau:** "Instrumental music had no place in the early Christian churches."

- **Joseph Bingham:** "From the first and apostolic age singing was always a part of Divine service, in which the whole body of the church joined together."
- **David Lipscomb:** "It seems there cannot be doubt but that the use of instrumental music in connection with the worship of God, whether used as a part of the worship or as an attraction accompaniment, is unauthorized by God and violates the oft-repeated prohibition to add nothing to, take nothing from, the commandments of the Lord."
- **N. B. Hardeman:** "So then, unless in the New Testament dispensation some man can put his finger upon that passage of Scripture which indicates authority for instruments of music in the worship, there is a departure from the principle of the fathers and from the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ."
- **Moses E. Laird:** "What defense can be urged for the introduction into some of our congregations of instrumental music? The answer which thunders into my ear from every page of the New Testament is, none. Did Christ ever appoint it? Did the apostles ever sanction it or did any one of the primitive churches ever use it? Never."
- **Foy E. Wallace:** "Where is the command that requires the use of instrumental music to obey? Where is the New Testament passage that says use it, or that mentions it as being used in the worship? In order for anything to be apostolic, the apostles must command it; in order for anything to be scriptural, the scriptures must teach it, by precept or approved example."

What all of this church history tells us is that New Testament silence in regard to mechanical instruments in Christian worship was not "coincidental," but "intentional." Notwithstanding, as insightful and interesting as church history may be, it is important for one to understand that Scripture alone – (*Sola Scriptura*) not church history – gives divine authorized instruction for fulfilling the will of God in all aspects of worship. The inspired Scripture clearly warns us that there will be false prophets and teachers in the Church, who will bring in destructive heresies, and many will follow their destructive ways (2 Pet. 2:1, 2 – NASB).

Summary and Conclusions Drawn:

With the intent of silence having been established and confirmed through New Testament Scripture, we have no divine warrant for using mechanical instruments of music in New Testament Christian worship. The intended silence of the text is as instructive as if we had a passage of Scripture telling us point blank: "Mechanical instruments of music are not to be used as a part of Christian worship." It is a classic case where silence speaks volumes.

- The Lord Jesus Christ and the inspired writers of the New Testament never commanded it.
- The New Testament Scripture does not "authorize" it.
- It does not come by hearing.
- It is not an act of faith.
- It cannot please God.
- The use of mechanical instruments of music in Christian New Testament worship "goes beyond" what is written in the New Testament.
- To "go beyond" that which is mentioned in the New Testament law of worship is "transgression."
- The law governing New Testament Christian worship is transgressed by any act of worship "not included in it" and transgression of the law is sin.
- Therefore, the use of mechanical instruments of music in New Testament Christian worship is sin.

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The Christian Courier and Members of the New Testament Church of Christ Believe in the Following Core Tenets According to the Scripture:

- The essentiality of water baptism is necessary for one to become a member of the New Testament Church (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38; 8:36; 10:47; 16:33).
- One Lord... One faith... One baptism (Eph. 4:5).
- The efficacy and sufficiency of Scripture which is the inerrant Word of God. The New Testament contains all we need to know about how to worship God in the manner which He has prescribed (John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16).
- Acapella singing in corporate worship is the ONLY method of singing authorized by the New Testament Scripture (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- Using mechanical instruments of music in relation to corporate worship violates New Testament teaching and it is therefore a sin (Rom. 10:17; 14:23).
- Partaking of the Lord's Supper EVERY first day of the week [Sunday] (Acts 20:7).
- The three-fold personhood and character of God. God the Father, God the Son [Jesus Christ], God the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:4, 13, 14; 1 John 5:7).
- The universal priesthood of all baptized believers. Every New Testament Christian has access to God the Father through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:2; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 5:10).
- New Testament Christians are saved by grace and justified by obedient faith (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:8).
- The visible kingdom of God according to Scripture is the New Testament Church of Christ (1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 3:14, 15).



“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

The “Historical” National Lectureship – *Christian Courier* Newspaper and Ministers’ Institute Conference (MIC) Position Statement

Following the death of Moses, the Lord God gave specific instructions and a promise to Joshua who became the leader of Israel. God encouraged Joshua by saying to him: *“Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them – to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses... No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life... Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all of the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go”* (Joshua 1:2, 3, 5, 7 – NIV).

In reference to matters concerning the “Historical” National Lectureship along with the Ministers’ Institute Conference and the *Christian Courier* news periodical which is regarded as the “Literary Voice of the National Lectureship,” our affirmative position mirrors the same charge God gave to Joshua.

We will not succumb to the extremist digressive views of a few libertarians within our fellowship and neither will we surrender to the platform of a few legalistic right wing ultra-conservatives. As William Lloyd Garrison the renowned nineteenth century abolitionist and editor of *The Liberator* newspaper aptly declared regarding slavery: “I am in earnest, I will not equivocate, I will not excuse, I will not retreat a single inch...”

Brethren, please understand that the National Lectureship has not forgotten its loyal base of adherents who have supported our annual event with a level of fidelity and consistency. In addition, the expectation for those who are selected to participate on the Lectureship is that they must of necessity *“speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine”* (Titus 2:1 – NKJV).

The “Historical” National Lectureship along with the *Christian Courier* and Ministers’ Institute Conference asserts the following credo: 1) Authentic New Testament Christian worship stems from

obedience to God's Word, God's will, and God's way. 2) New Testament Christian worship according to the Scripture must never lose sight of its divinely inspired biblical identity. 3) The objective of New Testament Christian worship is for the sole purpose of giving glory to God and not ourselves. This includes “edification” and “enlightenment” and not “entertainment.”

Brethren, please understand that the National Lectureship has not forgotten its loyal base of adherents who have supported our annual event with a level of fidelity and consistency.

Unfortunately, there are some preachers in the modern-day African American Church of Christ who are caught up in a theological “zeitgeist.” They are attempting to lead God's people away from a “thus saith the Lord” interpretation of New Testament doctrine while seeking to supplant apostolic principles with a mutated form of so-called “fellowship.”

Wise and faithful Church of Christ leaders should take heed to the admonition of G. K. Chesterton, a Christian apologist and the “Prince of Paradox.” Chesterton warns: “He who marries the spirit of the times will soon find himself a widower.”

In addition, the expectation for those who are selected to participate on the Lectureship is that they must of necessity “speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1 – NKJV).

Despite the fact that many of our past “Defenders of the Faith” have been called from labor to reward, something needs to be said concerning those who continue to promote false doctrine within the visible kingdom and across our fellowship.

Having read numerous primary source documents authored by pioneer preachers in the African American Church of Christ, this writer feels it is needful to share with

others valuable information as it pertains to our present state. The following excerpt entitled “Current Issues Facing the Church” was written by the late Dr. R. N. Hogan and published in the April 1970 edition of the *Christian Echo*.

Hogan begins this article by saying: “One of the things that is outstandingly condemned in the Book of God is division. Yet, in the face of this fact there are those who claim to be servants of God that continue to make every contribution within their power to create and perpetuate division in the body of Christ. This thing is a sin. Those who engage in it are sinners. They claim to be Christians and servants of God but in reality they are servants of the devil.

“The apostle Paul said, ‘For ye are carnal: for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?’ (1 Cor 3:3). Again, ‘Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment’ (1 Cor. 1:10). And again, ‘Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them, for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple’” (Rom. 16:17, 18). (Hogan, 1970).

Unfortunately, there are some preachers in the modern-day African American Church of Christ who are caught up in a theological “zeitgeist.” They are attempting to lead God's people away from a “thus saith the Lord” interpretation of New Testament doctrine while seeking to supplant apostolic principles with a mutated form of so-called “fellowship.”

This is the same biblical process which occurred April 29-30, 1986, at the “Gold Coast Restoration Forum” in Miami, Florida. The false teacher(s) were identified and subsequently “marked” with letters sent across the brotherhood because of their heretical doctrine which is contrary to the infallible, inerrant, and inspired Word of God. Should any difference be made today in 2023?

Wise and faithful Church of Christ leaders should take heed to the admonition of G. K. Chesterton, a Christian apologist and the “Prince of Paradox.” Chesterton warns: “He who marries the spirit of the times will soon find himself a widower.”

Whenever a Church of Christ preacher “publicly” declares that using mechanical instruments of music in New Testament worship is NOT sinful and there are “Christians in other churches,” his statements should be refuted “publicly” according to the Scripture.



The Christian Courier Acknowledges African American Church of Christ Gospel Preachers Who Have Passed Since 2019

The Christian Courier newspaper acknowledges African American Church of Christ gospel preachers from across the brotherhood who have passed away since the year 2019.

If there is someone you know of that we have unintentionally omitted from this list, kindly inform us as to whom they are. Furthermore, we are asking that you pray without ceasing for the families of these individuals.

Brotherhood Preachers Recognition:

Bell, Valanderous - Sulphur Springs, TX
 Brown, Joseph - Richmond, VA
 Burgess, Glen - Houston, TX
 Cecil, Cloyis - Winston-Salem, NC
 Chapman, Roosevelt - Montgomery, AL
 Cheeks, Darryl L. - Evanston, IL
 Dulin, Frank - Greensboro, NC
 Evans, Jack, Sr. - Terrell, TX
 Evans, N. L. - Texarkana, TX
 Fleming, Kenneth E. Sr. - Louisville, KY
 Florence, Franklin Sr. - Rochester, NY
 Foster, Thomas - Houston, TX
 Harris, James, Sr. - Gulfport, MS
 Hubbard, Paul - Grand Rapids, MI
 Jackson, Ervin - Melbourne, FL
 Jackson, Mike L. - Brunswick, GA
 Jones, Amanzo - Nashville, TN
 Jones, William E. Sr. - Chicago, IL
 Lawton, Eugene - Newark, NJ
 Lewis, Ellis Sr. - Los Angeles, CA
 Maloy, Theaster - Houston, TX
 Merriweather, Fred L. Sr. - Chicago Hts, IL
 Moore, Zebedee - Valdosta, GA
 Morrison, Woodie - Dallas, TX
 Myers, Derric C. - St. Louis, MO
 Perkins, David - Indianapolis, IN
 Rose, Richard A. Sr. - Valdosta, GA
 Smiley, John - Buffalo, NY
 Thompson, James Mark - Detroit, MI
 Thompson, Merlon "Mack" - Phoenix, AZ
 Tinsley, James Sr. - Dallas, TX
 Walker, Dallas A. Sr. - Detroit, MI
 Watson, Naaman A. Sr. - Robbins, IL
 Wells, Roosevelt C. - New York City, NY
 Wooden, Larry R. - Indianapolis, IN

Special Features Included in the "Historical" National Lectureship

- Daily Morning and Afternoon Plenary Workshop Sessions
- Daily Morning and Afternoon Lyceum Speaker Sessions
- Daily "High Noon" Chapel Speaker Sessions
- Daily Evening Vesper Service Speaker Sessions
- "From the Pioneers to the Present" Tuesday Afternoon Interview with Dr. W. F. Washington
- "Unity in Diversity – Christians Only or the Only Christians?" (Part One) Wednesday Afternoon Open Forum
- "Silence of the Scripture – The Biblical Law of Inclusion and Exclusion (Part Two) Thursday Morning Open Forum
- Daily Women's Division Program (Monday through Wednesday)
- Annual National Lectureship Formal Banquet
- Special Recognition and Tribute of Deceased Minister's Widows

According to quantitative data, Houston, Texas, is the fourth largest city in the United States following New York City, Los Angeles, California, and Chicago, Illinois.

The 2023 Annual National Lectureship will convene during June 17-22 at the Hyatt Regency in Downtown Houston and it is expected to be one of the best ever to take place.

We invite you to attend the "Historical" National Lectureship which began in 1945 and it is still the signature fellowship gathering held among African American Churches of Christ.

For additional information, please refer to the flyer above in order to secure your registration. The Lectureship website is: www.nationalcolectureship.com

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Previous Annual National Lectureship Cities

| | | | |
|------|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 1945 | Oklahoma City, Oklahoma | 1985 | Chicago, Illinois |
| 1946 | Houston, Texas | 1986 | Jackson, Mississippi |
| 1947 | Los Angeles, California | 1987 | Little Rock, Arkansas |
| 1948 | Chicago, Illinois | 1988 | Saint Louis, Missouri |
| 1949 | Philadelphia Pennsylvania | 1989 | Cleveland, Ohio |
| 1950 | Cleveland, Ohio | 1990 | Houston, Texas |
| 1951 | Detroit, Michigan | 1991 | Denver, Colorado |
| 1952 | Indianapolis, Indiana | 1992 | Winston-Salem, North Carolina |
| 1953 | Wichita, Kansas | 1993 | Augusta, Georgia |
| 1954 | New York City, New York | 1994 | Oklahoma City, Oklahoma |
| 1955 | Birmingham, Alabama | 1995 | New York City, New York |
| 1956 | Los Angeles, California | 1996 | San Antonio, Texas |
| 1957 | Houston, Texas | 1997 | Sacramento, California |
| 1958 | Chicago, Illinois | 1998 | Baltimore, Maryland |
| 1959 | Memphis, Tennessee | 1999 | Kansas City, Missouri |
| 1960 | San Francisco, California | 2000 | Dallas, Texas |
| 1961 | Detroit, Michigan | 2001 | Miami, Florida |
| 1962 | Denver, Colorado | 2002 | Los Angeles, California |
| 1963 | Dallas, Texas | 2003 | Detroit, Michigan |
| 1964 | Toledo, Ohio | 2004 | Seattle, Washington |
| 1965 | Kansas City, Missouri | 2005 | Nashville, Tennessee |
| 1966 | Indianapolis, Indiana | 2006 | Chicago, Illinois |
| 1967 | Newark, New Jersey | 2007 | Cincinnati, Ohio |
| 1968 | Fort Lauderdale, Florida | 2008 | Birmingham, Alabama |
| 1969 | Houston, Texas | 2009 | Jackson, Mississippi |
| 1970 | Augusta, Georgia | 2010 | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania |
| 1971 | Cleveland, Ohio | 2011 | New York City, New York |
| 1972 | Portland, Oregon | 2012 | Louisville, Kentucky |
| 1973 | San Antonio, Texas | 2013 | Houston, Texas |
| 1974 | Louisville, Kentucky | 2014 | Atlanta, Georgia |
| 1975 | Saint Louis, Missouri | 2015 | Chicago, Illinois |
| 1976 | Tulsa, Oklahoma | 2016 | Memphis, Tennessee |
| 1977 | Chattanooga, Tennessee | 2017 | Atlanta, Georgia |
| 1978 | New York City, New York | 2018 | Greensboro, North Carolina |
| 1979 | Milwaukee, Wisconsin | 2019 | Saint Louis, Missouri |
| 1980 | Muncie, Indiana | 2020 | Cancelled – COVID-19 |
| 1981 | Dallas, Texas | 2021 | Cancelled – COVID-19 |
| 1982 | Los Angeles, California | 2022 | Orlando, Florida |
| 1983 | Memphis, Tennessee | 2023 | Houston, Texas |
| 1984 | Fort Lauderdale, Florida | 2024 | Montgomery, Alabama |



African American Churches of Christ "Historical" National Lectureship Serving the Brotherhood Since 1945

"Preserving Our Past and Protecting Our Future"

"1945"



"2023"



Although each of the founding pioneers pictured above have been called to rest, the National Lectureship continues to serve as a vital link for our great brotherhood. The vision has not varied and the objective is to preach sound doctrine. In each generation there have been issues among a few brethren regarding the Lectureship. Such was the case in the era of R. N. Hogan and the same can be witnessed today. In addition, there is only ONE "Historical" National Lectureship that is "validated" among a consensus of African American Churches of Christ. With this in mind, *"Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not"* (Gal. 6:9).



"One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism"

Meet Me in Montgomery!



78TH ANNUAL
NATIONAL LECTURESHIP
of the Churches of Christ

March 30 - April 4
2024

**KINGDOM
CULTURE**

MATTHEW 6:33

IT'S COMING

78TH ANNUAL NATIONAL LECTURESHIP
of the Churches of Christ

HOSTED BY:
Southside Church of Christ
Montgomery, Alabama



Renaissance Montgomery Hotel
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The Churches of Christ 78th Annual National Lectureship will convene in the city of Montgomery, Alabama, at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel during the dates of March 30 - April 4, 2024.

Pre-registration \$160.00 per individual
(at the Houston Lectureship only)

Mail-in registration \$175.00 per individual.
Online registration is \$185.00 per individual.
On-site registration is \$195.00 per individual.

Lectureship registration includes all amenities and Banquet ticket. Only those who possess an official Lectureship Banquet Ticket will be admitted and served at the banquet.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”

Matthew 6:33 (KJV)

“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”

Acts 14:22 (AV)

“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood”

Colossians 1:13, 14 (KJV)



“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

“The Gospel of the Kingdom – Its Culture and Nature”

The gospel of the kingdom is an invitation for man to return to the realm of life God originally intended. The requirements for entrance into the kingdom include hearing the gospel, believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, repenting from previous behavior, confessing the name of Christ before men, and becoming baptized in water for the remission of sin.

By coming to faith in Christ and rendering obedience to His will, you are born into the kingdom thus becoming a resident of the kingdom. Residency in the kingdom of God is like immigrating to a new country. You must learn a different culture and it requires a new lifestyle governed by the laws of the kingdom.

The Two Greatest Kingdom Principles:

There are two great kingdom principles upon which all other principles are based. When asked what the greatest commandments were, Jesus replied: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”* (Matt. 22:37-40 KJV)

Mark recorded the same statement in the following way: *“And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these”* (Mark 12:29-31 KJV).

Jesus stated the second commandment in another way: *“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets”* (Matthew 7:12 KJV).

“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:31 KJV).

To summarize, according to Jesus the two greatest principles of God's kingdom are as follows:

- Loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- Loving and doing to others as you love yourself and want others to do to you.

All other kingdom principles are based upon these two principles. Each kingdom principle relates either to your relationship with God or with others.

By coming to faith in Christ and rendering obedience to His will, you are born into the kingdom thus becoming a resident of the kingdom.

When a person surrenders to the will, the way, and the Word of God by obeying the gospel, they become “born again” and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13). Speaking of those who have encountered the “new birth” experience, the apostle Paul has said, *“Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Phil 3:20 KJV).

The requirements for entrance into the kingdom include hearing the gospel, believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, repenting from previous behavior, confessing the name of Christ before men, and becoming baptized in water for the remission of sin.

Once a person comes to faith in Christ, God provides to them citizenship into His kingdom. They become “new creatures” (2 Cor. 5:17) and He gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit to indwell their spirit.

In the ancient Roman world a person could become the son of a father in one of three ways. He could be “born” into the family of a father, he could be “purchased” into the family of a father, or he could be “adopted” into the family of a father. Theologically speaking, in each instance as a member of God's family it means that we become citizens of an eternal kingdom where Jesus is Lord and King.

The Visible Kingdom and the Heavenly Kingdom:

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named...” (Eph. 3:14, 15 KJV)

Based upon the internal evidence of Scripture, in some instances there is a contextual and distinguishable difference between the New Testament Church (visible kingdom) and the “eternal kingdom.” These two entities as taught by the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul are close in nature and closely related but not always the same.

Several passages of Scripture validate a premise between the “visible kingdom” and the “eternal kingdom.” One such passage is found in Colossians 1:13 where the apostle says those who obey the gospel and accept Jesus as Lord are *“translated into the kingdom of Christ.”* Another is found in Acts 14:22 where Paul exhorts the disciples at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch who are already in the kingdom of Christ: *“That through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.”* In this passage the point is that they were already members of the “Church,” but they were yet to enter into another “phase” of the kingdom which is the “eternal” phase. Through their obedience and faith in Christ they were in the “visible kingdom” (Church) but still seeking earnestly to enter into the “eternal kingdom.”

After listing the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21, Paul writes: *“Envyings, murderers, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* Since the apostle speaks of the inheritance of the kingdom, and since the epistle was written as a warning to those who already held membership and fellowship in the “Church” or “visible kingdom,” he is evidently speaking of the “eternal phase” of the kingdom.

In other words, if such behavior is entertained by the people of God, it will subsequently cause them not to inherit the “eternal kingdom.” The “eternal kingdom” is sometimes spoken of as “the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ” (II Pet. 1:11). Notwithstanding, the point again is emphasized that there is a difference in nature regarding the “Church” or “visible kingdom” as we know it and the “eternal” or “heavenly kingdom.” God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ has but “ONE” family; however, there are “two phases” or “two locations” of the “WHOLE” family.

We who are members of the New Testament Church and visible kingdom, our “residence” is on earth, but our “citizenship” is in heaven. The mysteries that were made known to the apostles and to others through them were “mysteries of the kingdom” and the “mystery of Christ,” not the “mystery of the Church.” Jesus used the word “Church” only twice in His earthly discourse and in both cases He was referring to a distinct body of people. It seems apparently clear that the word “Church” is used only in a limited sense to designate God's people on earth, while the word “kingdom” designates the believer's relationship in both phases to God the Father.



“The Visible Kingdom (Church) – The Heavenly Kingdom (Eternal)”

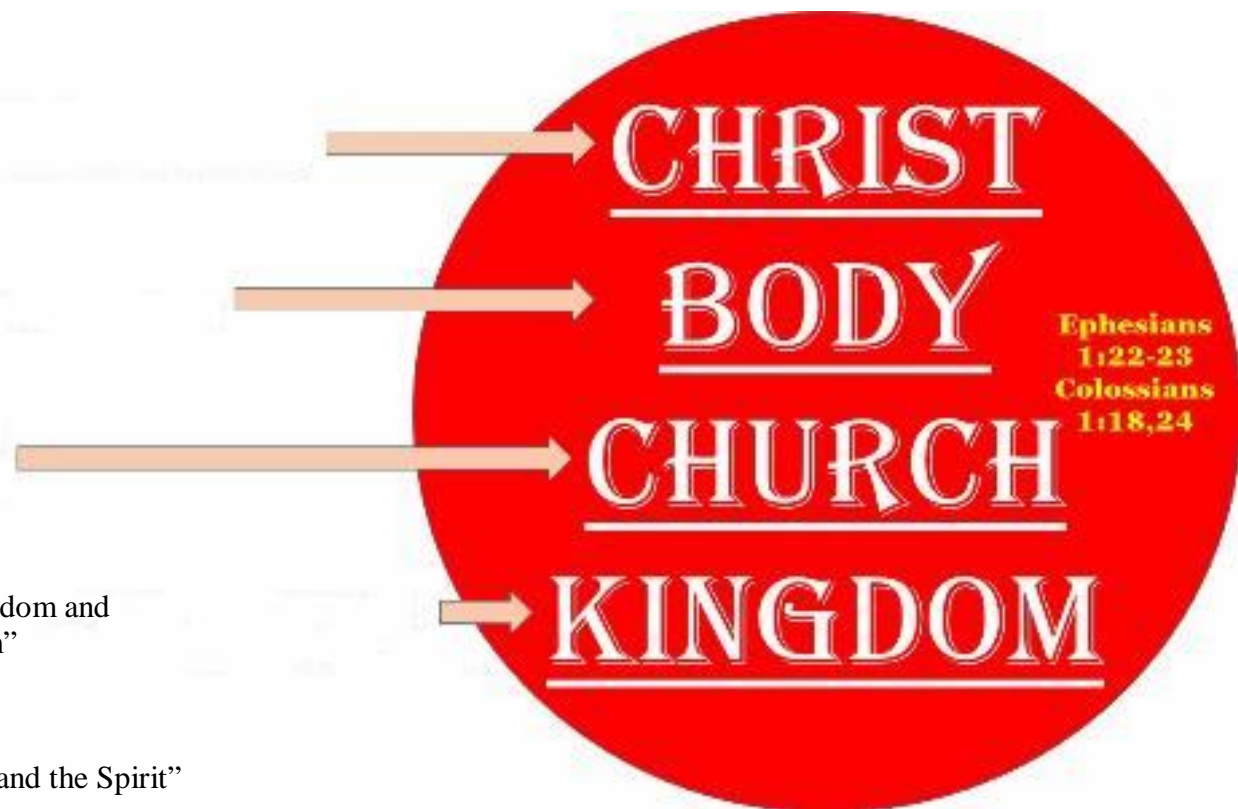
“We are baptized into Christ”
(Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:27)

“We become members of His body”
(Ephesians 5:30)

“We are added to the
New Testament Church”
(Acts 2:47)

“We are members of the visible kingdom and
translated into the heavenly kingdom”
(Colossians 1:13)

“We have been born again by water and the Spirit”
(John 3:3)



Summary and Conclusions Drawn:

1. The New Testament Church is understood as the “kingdom” to some degree in Scripture. However, the interpretation depends on the context where the term is found. Hermeneutical interpretation informs us that the word “Church” as it is used in the Bible simply means an “assembly” - nothing more and nothing less. From the standpoint of ecclesiology, it denotes a body of people called out from the ways of sin and dedicated to the service of God; there is no implication of organization or power of control. But the word “kingdom” or “*basileia*” as it had come to be known to the people of God of the first century embodied both of these. The word “*kingdom*” designates a relationship which demands the recognition of authority and provides assurances to those who give it.
2. The New Testament Church is a “colony of heaven” which lives in a “country of death.” The new birth not only gives us membership in the “visible kingdom” (the Church), but it also makes us citizens of heaven. Paul reminds the Church at Philippi that although they may be citizens of Rome who live in the country of Macedonia, they have a “higher citizenship” and are only foreigners on earth. As a result, their “conversation” (belief and behavior) should reflect the King of Glory who has “all authority” in heaven and earth.
3. The Philippian Christians understood the concept of a “colony” in a foreign land and their dual citizenship. We too must understand that because we are members of the “visible kingdom” having our “citizenship in heaven,” God and the Lord Jesus Christ holds us accountable as partakers of the divine inheritance. Understanding this reality should empower us to follow Jesus faithfully and help others find true freedom. When we live like this, we help expand the borders of the colony of heaven on earth. Knowing your expectations and purpose as a “citizen of heaven” affects your thinking and your behavior. Your courage and confidence builds when you remember there is no failure in God (1 Cor. 15:58).

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20 KJV).

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20 NASB).



W. F. Washington Theological Institute Ministers' Institute Conference USA



“Old Error in New Robes”
Galatians 1:5

Daily Seminarian Presentations – Evening Vesper Service – Thursday Evening Honor Banquet

“Washington-Wells Lecture Series” – Theological Constructs and Biblical Interpretation

Whereas the Churches of Christ “Historical” National Lectureship is the oldest and most distinguished annual event among African American Churches of Christ, the “Ministers’ Institute Conference” is the oldest and most celebrated “Conference” among African American Churches of Christ. The Ministers’ Institute Conference is scheduled once again to take place during the dates of January 15-18, 2024, in South Florida. Registration cost per individual will remain at \$160.00 and the selected theme is entitled: “Old Error in New Robes.” Additional information concerning this monumental gathering will be forthcoming soon.



“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”