

Voice of Baptists

"The Voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." *Isaiah 40:3*

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"INVISIBLE, UNIVERSAL CHURCH IDEA - SCRIPTURALLY DENIED!"

By F. W. Lambert
Westmoreland, Tenn.

I WOULD LIKE TO DENY THIS "invisible, universal church" idea. THERE IS BUT ONE SORT OF A CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, AND THAT IS A LOCAL AND VISIBLE CHURCH. A few phrases of scripture are here cited to show the existence of local, visible churches: "Then had the churches rest," Acts 9:31; "comforting the churches," Acts 15:41; "churches established," Acts 16:5; "neither robbers of churches," Acts 19:37; "churches give thanks," Rom. 16:4; "churches of Christ salute you," Rom. 16:16; "angels of the churches," Rev. 1:20; "the seven candlesticks are the seven churches", Rev. 1:20; "what the Spirit saith unto the churches," Rev. 2:7.

Any reader can see that the above references are to visible assemblies of people, and that these assemblies had a local meeting-place as a visible multitude in order to make-up a congregation. The word "church" means an assembly, most generally a small assembly that can conveniently gather together. But there is not a passage in the Bible where the word "church" is so used as to embrace meaning all the saved, in their divided, scattered, uncollected dispersion. When all the saved are included, they are considered as assembled together. When they are scattered, they are never spoken of as a church. There is, therefore, no such thing known in the Bible as an invisible church. This fiction is of modern creation, and is designed to include all those who are supposed to be saved, so as to allow them to have some sort of ecclesiastical fraternity in church matters. But Jesus Christ, the founder of the New Testament churches, never gave such an imaginary body. None of the inspired writers ever make mention of such a church. All the churches we read of in the Scriptures were local bodies with local meeting-places, for visible assemblies of men and women.

When we look at the New Testament churches as visible assemblies, we can see the meaning of several points. It could be said of them, "Let your light so shine before men," (Matt. 5). Visible church members can do this, but invis-

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THE MINISTER'S WIFE

By Paul Bryson
Alvaton, Ky.

In preceding articles, Brother F. W. Lambert has ably portrayed, "The Preacher." He has made us more aware of his characteristics as a man and his responsibilities as a minister. I would like to offer my thoughts on the preacher's wife.

When any young woman marries, she has dreams of having a home of her own, and looks forward to security now and in later life as she and her husband grow old together. But through the providence of God, the following describes what has happened:

The first shock comes when her husband declares that God has called him to preach the gospel. Excitement of a new life style is brought about by her new preacher-husband visiting around filling appointments at sister churches. But soon these experiences mold her man into a vessel meet for the Master's use. She watches him whet his sword and turn to prayer. His face is somber and he becomes restless. Word has been received from the front line of battle, that the enemy threatens the stronghold. Many of the old soldiers are dying; bravely wielding their swords, defending the faith. Moved by a holy zeal, he knows he must answer the call for his services.

It is then that the earlier dreams are shattered. She knows they must leave the good job, the family, friends, and all other security behind. She, as well as her husband, has to sacrifice her own goals in life to honor the marriage vows, "For better or worse, until death do us part."

I should say here, that God does not call women to preach, but I do believe most preachers will say they thank God

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A MOURNER'S BENCH

By Kenneth W. Massey

FOR THE SAKE OF JESUS CHRIST AND MY GREATEST NEED, GOD SAVED ME FROM MY SINS WHILE BOWED AT "A MOURNER'S BENCH" IN ENON CHAPEL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH OF TROUSDALE COUNTY, TENNESSEE.

Many religionists representing various and most denominations have taken great swipes against the church that has a designated place called "a mourner's bench" or an "altar", for sinners to bow and offer pertinent prayer to God through the mediatorial office held by Christ Jesus, our High Priest.

Some of these same folks think it more proper to turn to mortal flesh and regard him as equal with God, and thereby confess toward man what must be rendered toward God.

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REPORT FROM OREGON

By Vernon Roark, Pastor
Hauser Missionary Baptist Church of
North Bend, Oregon

We send our loving "thanks" to each of you who have supported us in prayers, letters, telephone calls, and with your means. Our financial report, since August 26th of this year, is as follows:

Old Union Baptist Church (Home Church)	\$1,332.36
Old Union S.S. Class #3	30.00
Chestnut Point Baptist Church (Ky).....	34.85
Elder Kenneth Davis (Ky)	25.00
Elder Bernard Skaggs (Ky)	100.00
A. M. Roark (Ky)	100.00
Independent Baptist Church (Tenn).....	100.00
Fellowship Baptist Church (Ind)	200.00
Mr. and Mrs. Winford Cook (Ky).....	25.00
Elder and Mrs. Roger Fowler (Tenn).....	55.00
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Nelson (Tenn).....	15.00
Mr. and Mrs. Wendell Carter (Tenn).....	25.00
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Brown (Ky).....	30.00
Elder and Mrs. Calvin Perrigo (Ind).....	35.00
Elder and Mrs. Kenneth Massey (Tenn).....	15.00
Elder and Mrs. Don Curtis (Tenn).....	50.00
Bro. and Mrs. Nathaniel York (Ind).....	10.00
Mr. and Mrs. Clay Meadors (Ky).....	10.00
	\$2,227.21
Hauser Missionary Baptist Church	1,523.12
Total Contributions thru Jan. 10th.....	\$3,750.33

"GOD HELPS THOSE WHO HELP OTHERS RATHER THAN THEMSELVES"

MINISTER'S WIFE

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for the companion He gave them.

Where is the preacher's wife that does not experience bitter disappointment, many tears, and most of all, a terrible loneliness! She lives with a burdened man who is not considerate enough of her interests, but she remains faithful, as one storm after another blows over. None can brighten the dark picture he sees, like she can. And when his faith is at it's lowest ebb, she humbly motions the Throne of Grace to help her lift up his weak hands. This friend with her heart in her eyes, is his encouragement when all others do not understand.

When she begins to feel secure in one place, he is called to another; sometimes another state. She explains the workings of the Holy Spirit to the children who do not understand why they have to change schools and leave their friends.

Indeed, God has put his demands upon this woman, but others have put unreasonable, unscriptural demands on her. I'm sure she would like to be perfect, but a measure of weakness prevents this. An old ailment flairs up now and then that she received long ago. The imprint of the forbidden fruit is still visible in her hands.

Her joys, in spite of all this, are immeasurable! Living so close to the working of the hand of the Lord, she reaps many blessings that others miss.

Any woman who can live her life with a contrary, unstable, multi-personality preacher; has achieved lifes highest challenges, and deserves a tip of the hat!

In view of the fact that we now recognize these many problems, many of the preachers have asked for a fellowship among the wives. Old Union church has approved the idea of inviting ministers' wives to the minister's school this year. In my home, away from preachers, church members, and everyone else, some of the older preachers' wives will tell their experiences as a help to younger preachers' wives. Everyone will be free to talk or ask questions. We feel certain this will be of great benefit to everyone. While the ministers are at school, the women can have this fellowship. So, we sincerely hope every minister's wife will make a sincere effort to attend this year.

* * *

WHEN I NEGLECT THE SERVICES OF MY CHURCH, I INJURE ITS GOOD NAME, I LESSEN ITS POWER, I DISCOURAGE ITS MEMBERS, AND I CHILL MY OWN SOUL.

DETOURED BY CRITICISM

Blessed are ye, when men...shall reproach you. Luke 6:22

If we are overly sensitive to criticism, our spiritual growth will be slowed and our service for the Lord Jesus will be limited. We must not let ourselves be controlled by our critics.

Have you heard about the father and his son who took a donkey to the market? The man sat on the beast and the boy walked. People along the way said, "What a terrible thing, a big strong fellow sitting on the donkey's back while the youngster has to walk." So, the father dismounted and the son took his place. Soon onlookers remarked, "How terrible, this man walking and the little boy sitting." At that, they both got on the donkey's back—only to hear others say, "How cruel, two people sitting on one donkey." Off they came. But other bystanders commented, "How crazy, the donkey has nothing on his back and two people are walking." Finally they were both carrying the donkey! They never did make it to the market.

Do you see yourself in this humorous story? Are there times when you become immobilized by the opinions and comments of others? Sensitive to everything they say, you are always unsettled. Of course, we must heed the helpful suggestions of concerned fellow believers. But to get all "shook up" by people who take delight in criticizing will divert us from our goal. We must have the same determination as the apostle Paul, who lived not for man's approval, but to please the Savior. He said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). That's the only way to keep from being detoured by criticism. —P.R.V.

I've asked the Lord to take from me
The supersensitivity
That robs the soul of joy and peace
And causes fellowship to cease.

—Graves

—Donated by Georgia Nelson

"To avoid all criticism, you must say nothing, do nothing, be nothing."

MOURNER'S BENCH

(Continued from Page 1)

Even some Baptists (so-called) are saying that salvation is without any spiritual effect upon the emotional feeling of a person. These also conclude that salvation is a growth wrought from a combination of grace, sanctification and works. None of the groups mentioned thus far are truly as critical of a "mourner's bench," as they are the repentance of the mourner. Pride has crept into many houses and caused the walls to come tumbling down.

CAN WE FIND A MOURNER IN THE SCRIPTURES?

"Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:9, 10).

We are not necessarily speaking of an outward, audible (to man) mourning, but that of the heart. Paul said, "For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10). David said, "the sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul....Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee" (Psalms 116: 3, 4, 7)

In the moment of true deliverance from the anguish afflictions, sorrows and griefs borne from sin, the mourner will unreservedly approach God with total disregard for earth's dignities and man's carnal pride.

Since the definition of the Greek word from which "mourn" has been translated is "grieve, sorrow," we may harmonize scriptures and thus conclude that all will perish who fail to mourn from a broken heart on account of sin. Christ said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Paul said, "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation." Therefore, based on the meaning of mourning (sorrowing), the penitent believer in Christ Jesus has uttered mourning and weeping toward the expiating throne of God's grace.

WILL ANY BE SAVED WHO FAIL TO GO TO A CHURCH MOURNER'S BENCH?

A bench is a bench. Benches do not save! The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. A "mourner's bench" has no more power to save than a bench in the city park. The late Elder Alfred Cook described the "mourner's bench" as well as I ever heard, when he said, "you don't

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**"TRUTH BY CONTRAST"**

By Darrell E. Hicks
Parkersburg, W. Va.

No doubt every reader has seen the pocket knife, which besides having a pocket blade, has a spoon, a fork, a corkscrew, a nail file, a small pair of scissors, a screwdriver, and yet even other devices which one might find useful when camping, or when unexpectedly lost in the woods. While all of these attachments may be used, they are awkward at best. One can eat with the spoon reasonably enough, but almost any standard made spoon is a far superior utensil. This little pocket knife is a good example of man trying to fashion some tool to accommodate more than one use. Numerous attempts have been made, but none have been completely successful. For best results, we must fashion a special tool for each special purpose.

In contrast, we look at the world which our God has fashioned. Notice the "air". What does it do? It supplies the lungs, feeds fire, conveys sound, propels ships, evaporates fluids, provides rain, diffuses scents, and countless other functions which man has already discovered, and is yet looking into, and we are at a loss to suggest anything which could do these jobs better.

For someone to say that God's work of creation is simple, would be but to betray the understanding of a shallow mind. No man would make such a statement because of the public ridicule he would bring upon himself. Everyone knows that the interwoven workings of nature are complex, intricate, and mysterious. We observe and stand in awe. In this I assume we all agree, God's work in creation is beyond human understanding more often than not.

For another contrast, let us turn our attention to a common error these days. I have heard the statement fairly often that, "The Bible is as easy to understand as the newspaper." Are not the Holy Scriptures the work of the Almighty, too? How can it be that no man can compete with God in ability to design and create, and yet we are now told that most any newspaper man is His match in writing capabilities? Not only is it unseemly, it is simply not true! With such a view one secular writer, only a few years ago, explained the first chapter of Ezekiel to be the landing of a space ship from another planet. If that were true, it troubles me

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OLD UNION BAPTIST MINISTERS SCHOOL

March 26-28

Dear Churches:

A wonderful fellowship and study time for God's servants has been scheduled at Old Union Baptist Church for this, the eighth year in succession. Would you like to help? Why not send your pastor and all ministers in your church to this year's session? The tuition is \$20 per person, which includes free lunches and compensates the teachers for their expenses.

This great opportunity is open to all God-called ministers - evangelists, missionaries, pastors and teachers. Hope all of you ambassadors for God can attend these three days of Bible teaching and fellowship grandeur.

For further information, you should write to: Elder Paul Bryson, Route 2, Alvaton, KY 42122.

"The mechanic that would perfect his work must first sharpen his tools."

LYONS CHURCH ANNOUNCES...**ORDINATION SERVICE APRIL 5TH**

A cordial welcome and general invitation is extended to everyone to attend this special service for consideration of ordaining Bro. Jimmy Hogue to the full work of gospel ministry. Becker Drive Miss. Baptist Church, also of Louisville, has called him for pastor, thereby requesting his ordination. The service begins at 1 p.m. E.S.T.

REVIVAL SERVICES APRIL 6TH

You are invited to meet with Lyons Church for a series of revival services. Elder Harold Carver of Bruceton, Tenn. will serve as evangelist. Elder Kenneth Davis is pastor of the church. Services begin each week night at 7:30 and 6:00 each Sunday evening.

INVISIBLE CHURCH DENIED

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ble church members cannot. It can be said, "Ye are as a city that is set on a hill that cannot be hid," (Matt. 5:14). An invisible church must always be hid, else it would not be invisible. A visible church can be thus manifest like a city. A visible church can receive and execute the commission of Matthew 28:19, 20. But an invisible church cannot, because, if there were any preachers in the invisible church, they could not deliver the gospel message to visible audiences for the reason that visible audiences would not quietly listen to the invisible preacher while he talked. They would have no ability to administer the Lord's Supper, because it is a memorial service to be seen by men, and an invisible church could not thus observe it.

It could not formulate nor propagate the doctrine of the commission for the reason that it must be done through the use of visible means for the good of visible people, which could not be done by the invisible.

But all of this could be true of visible churches with visible preachers administering visible ordinances.

There is no need for this "invisible church." Christians don't need it, because it can do them no good. God doesn't need it, because it cannot manifest His glory. The world doesn't need it, because it neither preaches the gospel by precept or example, and thus could be of no service. This "invisible" church cannot perform any functions of the church. It cannot have a church meeting, nor pastor, nor deacons, nor a church record, nor exercise discipline, nor receive members, nor exclude members, nor sing nor pray, nor preach, nor do anything else a church is expected to do. The members of the invisible church are entirely ignorant of their surroundings. There is nobody who can prove he is in such a church. If he is in it, he doesn't know it. And, if anyone else is in it, his neighbors, his brethren; they cannot know it either. If it had an enemy, no hurt could be done by him, because he could never find the thing he hates. Nobody could ever hate it, because it has neither form nor fashion, and is composed of nothing - so far as anybody can tell. If it had a friend, he could never do it a kindness, because he could not know where, or what, or on whom to bestow his attentions for the reason the thing is without form and void. No one knows who else is in it; no one knows that he is in it himself. The invisible church is a medley of contradictions if it is any thing. It is said to have in it, all the saved of all denominations. These

"saved" people, at the same time that they are in the invisible church, are also in their different denominational churches, and hold to all the peculiar doctrines of their several denominations. The Mormons with their "polygamy" in the years gone by; Catholics with their "wafer" God; Universalists with their "no-hell" doctrine; Methodists with their "apostasy"; Campbellites with their "baptismal regeneration"; Baptists with their close communion, and all of these mixed together in one invisible body - cemented together by the conflicting doctrines of infant baptism versus believer's baptism; salvation by works versus salvation by grace. Visible churches are New Testament churches, and visible churches are missionary Baptist churches. Thus Baptists will be able to do what no other people under heaven can do, that is, do the work of the New Testament churches.

**TRUST BY CONTRAST**

(Continued from Page 3)

that Ezekiel did not tell us whether or not he tried to preach repentance to them. We shall never know whether or not they were truly "aliens." Just such foolishness results from reading the Bible as a newspaper.

Turn again, my friend, and search for the truth with divine assistance. Behold the visionary representation of God's wonder-working processes which we call Providence. It shall not be seen in a brief reading (and unreasonable space would be required to elaborate), but close examination will reveal that to be the true subject and meaning of the text.

To look at a grassy field is a wonder to our eyes. However, it is also wondrous to examine one blade of grass closely and see the intricate handiwork of the Master of Creation. So also, the Bible as a whole is an amazing production of the divine mind. But it, too, will reveal intricate and precious truth to those who desire a better understanding of the ways of an all-wise God.

How to close but with Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

MOURNER'S BENCH

(Continued from Page 3)

have a "mourner's bench" anywhere until you have a mourner, and any place the mourner receives forgiveness of sins becomes his "mourner's bench." Emphasis should be placed on the mourner, rather than a certain place.

Some have misrepresented the "mercy seat" as being the same thing as "a mourner's bench," and therefore, built quite a case in favor of "the mourner's bench" being a better place to be saved. A "mercy seat" always represents a place of propitiation or a place of sin covering. In either case blood was required. The types of the blood of Christ were represented in that of bulls and goats. These were applied to the "mercy seat" under the Levitical priesthood. Christ entered heaven and offered once on the "eternal mercy seat" his own blood to obtain eternal redemption for every true believer.

The Apostle Paul was saved on the road to Damascus. The road became Paul's "mourner's bench." The thief was saved on the cross; his cross being his "mourner's bench." Zacchaeus found his "mourner's bench" to be a limb in a sycamore tree. Floyd Collins used the prison of a cave as his "mourner's bench," and died without ever again seeing the light of day. One of the astronauts made an altar or "mourner's bench" on the moon, when he humbled his heart in repentance to God.

All people have been saved at the same place! "With the HEART man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." I believe it pleases God for His churches to preach the whole counsel of His Holy Word, and encourage all convicted of their sins to seek God with all their hearts. Every church should have an altar place for prayer in behalf of sinners.

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BIBLE STUDY

Marlboro Baptist Church of Vale, Tenn. is sponsoring a Thursday evening Bible Study each week. Basic Baptist doctrines are being taught, and Elder Kenneth Massey was selected as teacher. This study is open for EVERYONE - saved and unsaved, church members and non-members, preachers, deacons, Sunday School teachers and all lay members.

Services begin each week at 7 P.M.

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