

“Give Us A King”

Introduction. In 1 Samuel 8, the Holy Spirit preserved a lesson about the tendencies of man — that most want to be like the majority. The context of the passage is that Samuel had become an old man and his ungodly sons were judges in Israel. The reaction to Samuel’s sons was that the people desired a king to rule over them "like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8:4). This was a rejection of God’s plan and a rejection of God (1 Samuel 8:6). Sadly, like Israel of old, some churches of Christ want to be like those around them, and we will examine five troubling areas of compromise.

I. Is Immersion A Condition Of Salvation?

- A. Sadly, the day has now come when some are adopting the erroneous views of those who were met and defeated in debate years ago. The Fourth Avenue Church of Christ in Franklin, Tennessee announced that it would accept, and has accepted, as members those who have been “baptized” as infants, those who have been baptized for some other reason than the remission of sins, as well as those who have not been baptized by “any method.” Gary Holloway, from Lipscomb University, said, “Currently there is some controversy among churches of Christ regarding immersion. Many of us cannot deny that there are many devout Christians who are unimmersed.”
- B. Scripturally speaking, there are not different ways for Bible baptism to be administered. In Romans 6:4-5 and Colossians 2:11-12, Paul makes it plain that baptism is an immersion or burial. Furthermore, Acts 8:35-39 provides a crystal-clear example of the action of Bible baptism (cp. John 3:23).
- C. The purpose and design of baptism is also clearly addressed in the New Testament. Consider for a moment trying to get from San Antonio (point A) to Houston (point B). A map tells you the exact route to take. In the Bible, how do you get from unsaved (point A) to saved (point B)? The common thought in the religious world is that baptism does not stand between point A and point B. But what do the scriptures teach?
 1. Baptism stands between the sinner and remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
 2. Baptism stands between the sinner and having sins washed away (Acts 22:16).
 3. Baptism stands between the sinner and the benefits of Christ’s death (Romans 6:3).
 4. Baptism stands between the sinner and new life in Christ (Romans 6:4).
 5. Baptism stands between the sinner and wearing Christ’s name (1 Corinthians 1:13).
 6. Baptism stands between the sinner and being in Christ’s body (1 Corinthians 12:13).
 7. Baptism stands between the sinner and being in Christ (Galatians 3:27).
 8. Baptism stands between the sinner and the benefits of spiritual circumcision (Colossians 2:11-12).
 9. Baptism stands between the sinner and salvation (1 Peter 3:21).
- D. God has clearly told man what he must do to be saved. Man is told to believe in Christ as the Son of God (John 3:16), repent of one’s sins (Luke 13:3, 5),

confess one's acceptance of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:10); and then be baptized for remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). However, man has rejected this plan of God and inserted his own plan — a plan that usually only includes the “Sinner’s Prayer,” where one simply asks Jesus to come into their heart and save them from their sins. However, the “Sinner's Prayer” is not found anywhere in the inspired word of God. Just like Adam and Eve, man today has come up with his own plan of salvation and rejected God's plan in the process. Man has become so good at changing God's plan that many today in churches of Christ have accepted and now practice plans of their own making that have no foundation in the Holy Bible. It seems that for many churches, “scriptural authority” is no longer required for what they do.

II. How Should We View Denominations?

- A. If one doubts that churches of Christ have changed in the past half century, Floyd Decker wrote a tract in 1944. Decker, a minister of the Christian Church, left that church to become a minister in churches of Christ. In his tract, “Why I Left the Christian Church,” Decker listed several unscriptural practices of the Christian Church not practiced in churches of Christ. Among the items Decker listed as not being practiced in churches of Christ were women counselors, directors, and lecturers; educational directors, associate ministers, and youth directors; missionary, benevolent, and educational organizations; celebration of Easter, Mother’s Day, and Christmas; fellowship with various denominations; Campaigns for Christ, rallies, drives, and promotions; elevation of preachers; taking up collections at services other than the first day of the week; operating and owning radio stations, hospitals, and other benevolent societies; and church support of colleges and schools.
- B. All of the items listed by Decker as not being practiced by churches of Christ in 1944 are common practices of mainstream churches of Christ today. This leaves no doubt that churches of Christ have changed. Churches of Christ are looking more and more like the denominations they have opposed for years.
- C. Through most of the history of churches of Christ in America it would have been rare for any to participate with any denomination in anything that implied approval or endorsement. Instead, teaching in classes and pulpits was bold to denounce the errors of denominations. But that is now sadly changing. An announcement at the Skillman Church of Christ read, “What fun! It was a joint meeting of Skillman Church of Christ and Wilshire Baptist Church for an evening of food, fellowship, and worship in north Dallas.”
- D. Some churches of Christ, like the White Station church in Memphis, Tennessee, have opened coffee shops in their buildings. White Station says the coffee shop is for social activities, birthday parties, card games, etc. The Crown Hill church of Christ in Seattle, Washington invites all to have “Coffee and Donuts, Sundays at 10 a.m.” and ask all to “Come and fellowship with us.”
- E. One church in Birmingham, Alabama has a dance teacher on staff to teach dance to kids and adults. We see advertisements from churches of Christ inviting the community to become a part of their soccer teams, join their work out classes, and to come jog with them. Parties of all kinds are given, including

Halloween parties with “trunk-or-treat” and free food. It seems that many have perverted the plea of Christ from “Come unto Me,” to “Come on, let the good times roll!”

- F. Others build Family Life Centers (gyms, with a fancy name) in order to have a place for all to play basketball and volleyball while the older members can play shuffleboard, knit, sew, play cards, and take yoga classes. Some, while opposed to the church sponsored gyms, argue that if they don’t build them their youth will wander off to the more liberal churches that have them. The attitude is, “If you can’t lick ‘em, join ‘em.” This is the embodiment of the “give us a king” tendency.
- G. People who are uninformed may think of the church of Christ as just another denomination, but a denomination is not what Jesus built (Matthew 16:18). A church that follows the faith and practice of the scriptures is undenominational. Fidelity to the truth demands that denominationalism be opposed. As a system it presumes to tolerate division of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:4; John 17:20-21).
- H. Many in churches of Christ today have no understanding of scriptural authority. Gone in many churches is the teaching of establishing biblical authority by command or precept, biblical examples, and necessary inference (forced conclusions). Authority is defined as “right, power, or jurisdiction” (1 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Peter 4:11). Yet many do not “search the scriptures” to determine whether they have the authority to practice many of the elements that are now, after many years, ingrained in some churches of Christ.
- I. We should view denominations as organizations composed of decent, honorable, and sincere people. Generally, they hold many convictions that are morally and spiritually correct. But even the most admirable characteristics of people and organizations cannot overshadow the need for commitment to truth in faith and practice (Matthew 15:9-13).

III. Does Worship Matter?

- A. In an article published September 4, 2013, the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas joined the ever-increasing number of churches of Christ to add instrumental music to their worship services. As more and more of these larger churches add instrumental worship, other churches will continue to follow their lead and will fall like dominos.
- B. Most Christians who lived through the last half of the 20th century believed the question on music in the worship of the church had been settled. However, Mark Henderson, of the Quail Springs Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, said, “Our typical band is going to look like a drum set, a keyboard, and usually two or three guitars.” The Preston Road Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas once advertised for a “worship minister” on their website. The requirements included a college degree, a “well-developed personal theology of worship,” and “ability to play either keyboard or guitar.” He further must be “capable to lead worship both a cappella and instrumentally.”
- C. There are a number of reasons why faithful churches of Christ only sing.
 - 1. The New Testament teaches us to sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). It does not teach us to play an instrument.

2. The New Testament contains generic and specific instructions. If God said, “make music” (generic), any kind of music would do. However, God said, “sing” (specific), and that is a specific kind of music.
 3. We walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7) that comes by hearing God’s word (Romans 10:17). Singing is by faith, and instruments are not.
 4. We are to worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). God’s word is truth (John 17:17), and the truth teaches us to sing.
- D. Other changes in worship include making the Lord’s Supper a common meal instead of a spiritual meal. During these services, members gather around large tables with gallons of grape juice and loaves of bread for an extended period of time. They criticize and vilify their brethren who disagree with them as the “pinch and sip” brethren. Those who want to change the worship of the church are following human wisdom and cannot find one word in the New Testament that justifies their innovations.

IV. Are There Limitations On The Role Of Women?

- A. On the television program, “In Search of the Lord’s Way,” sponsored by churches of Christ, Mack Lyon dealt with the growing problem of women in leadership roles in churches of Christ. This set off a storm of protests from viewers. Citing scriptures as to why women do not have authority for such roles did not prevent the onslaught of protests. One lady wrote, “God help us. This message is from churches of Christ.” She also wrote, “I couldn’t disagree more with his message. And yet people in Abilene hear that it’s from churches of Christ.” Raymond Elliott, an institutional preacher writes, “She was upset that the television program was sponsored by churches of Christ and that the public would think that all churches of Christ would agree with this brother’s sermon.” Elliott went on to say, “Please take a deep breath and read slowly the following remark by this individual: ‘Pretty soon, they’ll all be dead, including Mack Lyon, and the problem of traditional cocer’s will snuff itself out.’”
- B. Mike Cope, a preacher at the Highland church of Christ in Abilene, Texas and a teacher at Abilene Christian University, said on his website, “Of course, I think this brother (Mack Lyon) is wrong. Way wrong ... I’m becoming more and more convinced that only time will take care of this.”
- C. At the 2003 Abilene Christian College Lectureship there were three lectures presented on how to change churches of Christ without losing members. One speaker from Lubbock spoke on how they changed the worship (drama, choirs, and praise teams of men and women). One spoke on the change in leadership. Another spoke on how women were brought into a more public role in the worship service of their local congregation by having women baptizing their children; making announcements; one lady handles the weddings and funerals at Highland; women giving testimonies; female missionaries making reports before the church; women praying over babies before the congregation, etc.
- D. The elders of the Skillman Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas stated, “The majority of us believe the Bible does not inherently forbid women using their God-given talents ... within and without the worship assembly.” An “Area of Service” form for men and women listed the following activities in which women could be involved:

Usher, Serve Communion, Communion Meditation, Pray Publicly, Read Scripture Publicly, Sing with Worship Team, Sing Solo, Make Announcements, Deaconess, and Teach Adult Classes. Members were given three options to check off for each of the above: (1) I Am Willing To Serve; (2) I Support Women Serving; and, (3) While I Don't Support, I Will Accept Women Serving. There was no option for members to indicate an unwillingness to accept women in these roles.

- E. A major scripture to consider in the subject of the role of women is 1 Timothy 2:11-12. "Subjection" means "to line up under." Women demonstrate subjection by not usurping authority over the man. A bossy, overpowering spirit violates the command of learning in "silence" or "quietness" (1 Peter 3:3-4). "Silence" simply refers to the attitude of heart, not the physical act of speaking (cp. 2 Thessalonians 3:12). This is true not because women are inferior to men; while on earth, Jesus assumed a subordinate role, yet He was not inferior (1 Corinthians 11:3).
- F. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7, women cannot serve as elders. In 1 Timothy 3:8-12, women cannot serve as deacons, and in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, women cannot serve as preachers. However, the church of God needs all of its godly men and women. There are a multitude of tasks Christian women can do within the framework of what is authorized by scripture.

V. Where Do We Stand On Homosexuality?

- A. Along with these other errors, many have strayed from the New Testament and started reconsidering homosexuality. In 2008, Lipscomb University, in their "Christian Scholars Conference," allowed Jared Cramer, a former student of Abilene Christian University and a graduate student of the Sewanee School of Theology to present a lecture entitled, "One New Humanity: Reconsidering Homosexuality in Light of the Ecclesiology of Ephesians." The abstract states, "Paul's letter to the Ephesians presents an ecclesiology founded on unity in Christ rooted in the fullness of God. Ephesians builds on the fundamental truth that in Christ, God has broken down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles and is creating one new humanity in place of the two. After examining the ecclesiology of Ephesians, this paper engages in a case study on the place of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) Christians in the Episcopal Church. Perhaps a deeper understanding of Paul's message in Ephesians can lead to a renewed perspective on the issues facing Christians today."
- B. What possible justification could Lipscomb University have for arranging and/or supporting a program that embraces a defense of this ungodly sin? When the floodgate is opened, who can close it? Incredibly, Cramer asserts that any discussion of homosexuality "is shallow until a person actually engages in an actual relationship with a person of a different sexual orientation." I doubt my wife would appreciate this line of reasoning if I tried to justify having an affair on her!
- C. In October 2018, students at Lipscomb University celebrated National Coming Out Day. University President Randy Lowry attended a dinner with the LGBTQ+ community to discuss their experiences. As further proof of movement toward acceptance, there is now an LGBTQ liaison on campus.

D. Homosexuality was condemned by example in Genesis 19:4-7, and it was condemned explicitly in Leviticus (18:22; 20:13). In the New Testament, homosexuality is referred to as “vile affections” and “against nature” (Romans 1:26). Those who practice it will not go to heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). It is a deep shame that these gross levels of corruption are found among people that a few short decades ago were considered brethren.

Conclusion. While these teachings are coming and are now in some, if not many churches, the picture is clear; churches of Christ are about to weather another storm of liberalism. We would like to invite churches of Christ to seriously evaluate what has happened in their congregations in the past 30-50 years, and if you see a change from what was taught years ago, ask yourselves where you are going? Is the leadership in the church where you attend able to lead the church back to the elemental first century gospel? If the old guard doesn't question these attitudes and teachings, young Christians will never give it a thought.

If you are a member of a church that is getting further and further away from the New Testament gospel, we invite you to “come back.” There are numerous churches that have shunned the innovations of man for the true word of God. Do you have the courage to leave those that you love dearly, and worship at a church that has stood for the truth through the years? Are we like Israel of old? Do you cry, “Give us a king?” Do you want to be like everyone around you?