

Anniversary of Shame

It was 25 years ago (January, 1973) that the U.S. Supreme Court made their famous Roe v. Wade ruling making it legal for women to conspire with their doctors to murder their unborn children. Since then Americans have participated in a holocaust which dwarfs the atrocities of the Nazis.

“When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood” (Isa. 1:15).

—Al Diestelkamp



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The Name of the Church

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

When you look in the “yellow pages” under “churches” it is amazing to see the names that churches use to describe themselves. We’re in a fairly conservative rural community, so the names tend to be less bizarre than those I’m sure can be found in the more cosmopolitan areas. We have names like Calvary Baptist Church (GARBC) and Trinity Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod). Don’t you just love the parentheses? They tend to accentuate the sectarian spirit. Indeed, if there is nothing in a name, then one is made to wonder why some churches choose the names that they do.

It should be our desire to be content with the pattern of sound words that we have in scripture. Thus, when it comes to something as simple as identifying our individual or collective spiritual affiliations, it would seem that God’s word would provide us with ample guidance. How, then, should we identify ourselves? Is there a proper name for the church? Which church, universal or local?

There are brethren who insist that there is only one specific proper name that God has willed to be used in identifying the church, and it is “church of Christ.” This is no “straw man” that I am setting up.

The argument that I have seen finds its main root in Isaiah 62:2 which reads, “...You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name.” The assumption is that this new name was something not revealed until the New Testament. It is further assumed that the new name given to God’s people as the universal body of all righteous is the same name that each local church must use to identify itself. It is finally assumed that this new name is “church of Christ” based on what Paul said in Romans 16:16, “The churches of Christ greet you.”

Notice that the context of Isaiah 62:2 is talking about the city of Jerusalem. While I certainly believe that the new Jerusalem is Christ’s church, it is interesting to note that

no proper name is assigned to the bride of Christ in the New Testament in any of the passages that would show the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. In Isaiah’s day God referred to Jerusalem as Azubah and Shemamah and then said that the new Jerusalem would be called Hephzibah (62:4), not “church of Christ.” If we are to take Isaiah’s prophecy of a new name literally, then it would appear that Hephzibah is it, for nothing in the New Testament says otherwise.

Another argument that is made to bolster the idea that God intended the church to have a proper name is “God is not the author of confusion...” (1 Cor. 14:33). It is seriously suggested that for churches to use names other than “church of Christ” would be confusing.

First of all, notice that, instead of talking about the bride of Christ (the new Jerusalem with the new name), the fallacious argument is now applied to local churches. This sloppy movement between a discussion of local churches and the universal church as if they are one and the same is not accurate. Since no new name for local churches was ever prophesied or revealed in the New Testament, how a local group identifies itself is a matter of expediency.

Secondly, the irony of using 1 Corinthians 14:33 to support one proper name for the church is seen in that the verse talks about “the churches of the saints.” Now there’s an idea! Perhaps if we went to identifying ourselves as “churches of Saints” we’d start living more like saints than “church of Christ-ers.”

With respect to the issue of confusion: anybody who thinks that having the universal proper name “church of Christ” for local churches avoids confusion has not had much experience in visiting churches that employ that moniker. It is the lock-step overuse of this traditional proper name that is confusing. It has confused people into thinking that it is the only name that is right.

In the New Testament we find a local church being referred to as “the church of

God” (1 Cor. 1:2) or the church of (or in) a geographical location. Never is a single local church referred to as a “church of Christ”! Yes, there were churches of Christ, so it is reasoned that it is right to call a local group a “church of Christ.” That makes sense to me. Will that work with “churches of God” (1 Cor. 11:16) and “churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:33)?

To demand that brethren use one proper name to describe all local churches is as sectarian as those who call themselves by unscriptural designations. Binding what God has clearly not bound so as to avoid confusion is the trademark of a denomination, especially when it comes to binding a name. The descriptions of churches in the New Testament were not to identify them with any particular men, doctrines or movements. If we use “church of Christ” to identify ourselves as a group that came out of the restoration movement, then we are no less sectarian. If we use “church of Christ” to identify that we belong to Christ, then we do right, but then so do those who use other designations that convey something equally true and scriptural. Truth is, “church of God” is the most often used description of a local church. By what arrogant stretch of our imagination do we insist that our traditional “church of Christ” (which is never used in scripture) is the only proper name, and those who use “church of God” have an unscriptural name?

A parting salvo that is often launched by those with denominational tendencies who are seeking to preserve human tradition goes something like, “Are you ashamed of the name “church of Christ?” Absolutely not! Are you ashamed of the name “church of God?” The reason that many would shy away from that proper name is the same reason that others would rightfully shy away from “church of Christ.” They don’t want to be confused with the denomination of the same name and its traditions.

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Lending & Borrowing

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

Perhaps one of the most sensitive subjects that we could discuss with others pertains to money and more specifically debt (their debt).

If you stop and think about it, most of us would not appreciate others going over our budgets (do you have one?), analyzing our spending habits and being privy to our various debts. Certainly, the family budget is a rather private thing. However, sometimes we may become aware of the dire financial circumstances of others. That knowledge may require us to act. How we act will depend on the situation, but God's word certainly gives us some guidelines when it comes to the subjects of lending and borrowing.

As disciples of Jesus we are to look to Him for a pattern of how we should behave when we become aware of a financial crisis. Some of the most difficult principles Jesus taught relate to our treatment of others including our enemies. It is within that context that Jesus said, "And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back" (Lk. 6:34).

Often the previous passage is misunderstood to mean that it is wrong for us to ever loan money with the expectation of it being paid back. However, that can't be the meaning. Note that the previous verse says, "And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same." Surely no one would interpret that to mean that it is wrong to do good to those who do good to you. Jesus' point is not that these actions are wrong, but that they are not extraordinary. He is calling us to extraordinary behavior, and that will include the willingness to assist even our enemies expecting nothing in return.

The higher morality that the spiritual man is called upon to have in financial matters has two sides to it. It does not just call upon us to be willing to loan in times of need. Where there is a lender there is a borrower, and the spiritual man will honor his debts. Psalm 37:21 says, "The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous shows mercy and gives." The ideal situation is to have people who are eager to help others in times of need and people who are desirous of repaying those who have helped. It is the wicked who take advantage of the generosity of others but fail to repay that kindness. Just because the righteous are told to lend expecting nothing in return does not mean

that those who receive are not responsible to at least offer repayment.

Many of us have likely had the occasion to help others and have done so expecting nothing in return. However, not all loans are of that nature. Some loans are given benevolently with the understanding that there will be repayment in due time. Circumstances and situations of need versus want often play a part in what the lender expects. No matter what, borrowers are obligated to honor their debts. Borrowing is done with the understanding there will be repayment.

Occasionally, as brethren seek to help one another, there will be those who neglect to repay what they have borrowed. What is the lender to do in such a circumstance? Scripturally there are two options: He can forgive the debt, or he can follow the pattern of Matthew 18:15-17 to try and get the brother to honor his debt. Some might suggest that the lending brother is obligated to forgive the debt, but that does not necessarily follow.

While certainly there are benevolent situations in which we would all judge that the right thing to do is forgive the debt, this is not always the case. Those who have borrowed and cannot repay because of situations beyond their control are one thing, but those who will not repay are an entirely different matter. In some cases we do our brethren no favor to forgive their debts as we enable them to avoid responsibility and to go back on their word. We who are spiritual are to restore those who are overtaken in a trespass (Gal. 6:1), and that restoration may demand that they pay what they promised they would pay.

Ideally, any negligent borrower would endeavor to repay when confronted by the lender, but if he will not, then that sloth, rebellion and/or dishonesty must be dealt with by using other Christians and the whole church, if necessary, to bring about repentance and honorable action. Indolence is not to be tolerated (2 Thess. 3:6-15). Of course, lenders should be prepared to take the loss before going to worldly courts (1 Cor. 6:7) or out of mercy to a penitent brother (Matt. 18:27).

As lenders and borrowers let's always employ the upright principles that God's inspired word has given to us to guide us in all things that pertain to life and godliness. Let us seek to be merciful and sacrificial lenders and honorable and trustworthy bor-

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American Immorality

By **AL DIESTELKAMP**

If we can believe the opinion polls which have dominated the news in recent days, the vast majority of Americans have become apathetic toward the problems of immorality. Behavior which was once recognized as immoral has come to be viewed as acceptable.

It is our belief that God, as our Creator, has the right to declare something to be right or wrong. When He does so, it is our responsibility to honor His word on the matter. God has not remained silent on the subject of sexuality. Listen to what His word says: "Marriage is honorable among all, the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

Americans once listened to God on this subject. Since the so-called "sexual revolution" the conscience of America has been seared to such an extent that when we dare to point out God's condemnation of sexual immorality we are ridiculed as prudish, judgmental or suffering from some form of phobia.

There is no doubt that God has greatly blessed our nation, but it would be a mistake for America to take those blessings for granted. The Old Testament is filled with examples of God blessing nations as long as they furthered the cause of righteousness, but later bringing down those same nations when they persisted in wickedness.

God ordained governments for our good (Rom. 13:1-7) and said our leaders are "sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good" (1 Pet. 2:13-14). Our government is developing a pattern of doing just the opposite—praising evil and punishing those who do good. God has a warning about this too: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil..." (Isa. 5:20).

America has been famous for its pride. The time has come for America to be ashamed! "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a shame to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above article was incorporated in a teaching advertisement placed in *The Midweek*, a local newspaper delivered to virtually every household in DeKalb County, Illinois. Though it was addressed to the general public, it is a message which also needs to be considered by Christians. We need to remember that our holy living is the "salt" and "light" in this world and in our nation (Matt. 5:13-16).

FOUR SMALL, WISE CREATURES

By MATT HENNECKE

I am constantly amazed at the variety of life on earth. Animals, fish, birds—there are all kinds and varieties of each—and the variety speaks loudly of God's existence (Psa. 19:1). But of all the creatures God has created, there are four that seem particularly wise, even though they are small in size: the ant, the badger, the locust, and the spider. No, I haven't lost my senses, nor am I "stretching" for something to write about! I am simply reminded of the words of the Proverb writer:

"There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces" (Prov. 30:24-28)

The Ant

The Proverb writer begins by stating that ants are "not strong." In comparative terms this is true. After all, I can simply step on an ant and crush him! But in relative terms ants have amazing strength. Have you ever watched an ant carrying a morsel of food? They're tireless and strong. In fact, those who study ants tell us they can carry ten to fifty times their own weight! That would be like a 150 lb. man carrying an object of 1,500 to 7,500 pounds!

But more important than their relative strength, ants are constantly making preparation for the future. It seems they never rest. They are in constant motion as they go about their work. In Proverbs 6:6-8, the "sluggard" is warned to pattern himself after the ant: *"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest."*

Ants are also armored. Scientists call the hard, outer shell of an ant "chitin." It protects them from a hostile environment and contributes to their strength. Similarly, the Christian is to be armored. We also live in a hostile world. All around us are evil men who would undo our faith. But God, in his wisdom, has provided us with a unique and glorious armor—*"...take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand"* (Eph. 6:13).

Like the ant, we must constantly prepare. We must tirelessly go about the work of the Lord. *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work"* (Jn. 9:4).

The Badger

I'm not sure what animal the Proverb writer has in mind in this verse. The New American Standard (NAS) translates the Hebrew word (*shaphan*) as badger, while the King James Version (KJV) translates it as "cony" (rabbit). The concordances and commentaries don't help much either! Young's translates *shaphan* as "a hare, hedgehog, or rabbit," while Matthew Henry calls them "Arabian mice"!

Whatever they are, these animals make their houses in the rocks. They are small and weak, yet they have the wisdom to find security in the rocks. The spiritual comparison is compelling. Like the badger (or whatever) we can only find real security in the Rock! This message of security afforded by the Lord is found everywhere throughout scripture:

"The Lord is my Rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust...." (Psa. 18:2).

"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a Rock, and established my goings" (Psa. 40:2).

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I" (Psa. 61:2).

Notice Paul's remarks concerning the wandering children of Israel: *"...for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."* (1 Cor. 10:4).

The believer would be wise to emulate the rock badger by finding solace and care in the Rock that is Christ!

The Locust

A single locust is hardly noticeable. In fact, by itself, a locust is harmless and insignificant. But when locusts travel together they get the world's attention! No one knows better the damage a swarm of locusts can cause than the Pharaoh who refused to let God's people go: *"For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees...and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt"* (Ex. 10:15).

The lessons of the locust seems to be that: 1) God never intended for us to work alone, and 2) we can accomplish much by working together.

After the creation of Adam God knew it was "not good that man should be alone," (Gen 2:18) so Eve was created to provide Adam with help and assistance. This same principle of "joint effort" is described again in Ecclesiastes 4:9. The writer tells us that

"two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour." In other words, there is strength in numbers. The modern world refers to this phenomenon as "synergy"—which is best expressed in the following equation: $1 + 1 + 1 = 4$.

With synergy, the sum of the parts is *greater* than the individual parts alone. The importance of working together—of emulating the locust—is clearly seen in Christ's establishment of the church which is: *"... fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."* (Eph. 4:16).

The lesson Christians everywhere can learn from the lowly locust is this: if we "pull together" then we can change the world!

The Spider

The final creature mentioned in the passage again poses a translation problem. What exactly is the writer describing? The KJV renders the Hebrew word *semamith* as "spider," while the NAS renders it "lizard." Other translators even attach the word "poisonous" to the creature being described. More puzzling, however, is the meaning. Unlike the earlier creatures, the analogy of the spider is not clear.

In his commentary of the passage, Matthew Henry says: "Spiders are very ingenious in weaving their webs with a fineness and exactness such as no art can pretend to come near. They . . . spin a fine thread out of their own bowels, with a great art; and they are not only in poor men's cottages, but in kings' palaces."

Perhaps, then, the Proverb writer would have us understand this: The beauty of the spider comes from *within*, and he *shares* this beauty whether in a poor or rich man's dwelling.

If this is the meaning, then there are many wonderful biblical examples of men and women whose inner beauty brought hope to both the rich and poor of the world.

Joseph spun a web of beauty and godliness whether in prison or elevated to power in Egypt (Gen 39 - 41). Job spun a web of beauty—a web of service—when wealthy and when destitute. And let's not forget Paul. Whether preaching to the poorest of the masses or while imprisoned in the splendor of Caesar's palace, his inner spiritual beauty overflowed in his message of love for all who would serve God.

It is in the Good News of Christ, springing from within the true believer that "the rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all" (Prov. 22:2).

THIS IS A HARD SAYING

By ED BRAND

Jesus taught men to be careful how they hear or read the word of God. To the disciples, He cautioned, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you" (Mk. 4:24). He had been teaching the crowd in parables, (the soils, the sower, and the mustard seed). Men are responsible for what they hear: "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (vs 9). To the lawyer who made trial of Him, He asked, "How readest thou?" (Lk. 10:26). He replied: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus then said, "Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live."

Jesus hit an exposed nerve. This man knew what Scripture said, but he did not agree with what he read. It was hard for him. Read the next verse to see his reaction.

There are many such "hard" verses in the word of God. If you read much in the Bible, you will run across one before long. These "hard" verses can usually be divided into at least three categories.

1). Sometimes the passage is hard because we don't have all the information we need to reach a conclusion. Why did Jacob decide

Scouting Out Colleges?

When parents help their children "scout out" a college or university they often visit the campus and interview college officials. Don't neglect to make sure there is a good congregation nearby. Visit the congregation and talk with the leaders to make sure the student will find a church wherein he/she will thrive spiritually.

to keep Leah as his wife (Gen 29:21-28)? He had agreed with Laban for Rachel and worked for her seven years (Gen. 29:20). Why didn't he tell Laban, "No deal!"? Instead, he became a bigamist. I wish I knew more about this, don't you?

2). Some passages seem to contradict a cherished ideal or doctrine. The disciples heard Jesus reply to the Pharisees' question about Moses and divorce (Mt. 19:1-9). When Jesus gave His analysis of divorce and remarriage, He stipulated only one cause for such: "except for fornication." The disciples replied, "...it is not expedient to marry" (vs. 10). If Moses allowed divorce and subsequent remarriage, this new teaching is so hard that it would be better not to marry at all. It is possible to have the same feelings as the disciple when I read something which contradicts what I already believe. When my mind becomes so inflexible I cannot accept what a passage clearly teaches, I am controlled by tradition, not truth. Each person must so read and hear that all truth is honored and accepted.

3). A few passages are hard because they conflict with my own desire. Have you ever read a passage you wish read differently? When Scripture conflicts with lifestyle, the result may be Scripture is too hard to obey. For example, the prevalence of sexual promiscuity indicates many people find pleasure in casual sex. With great clar-

ity, Scripture proclaims this unacceptable and sinful (1 Cor. 6: 9-10). It then becomes "hard" in application, not in understanding.

By far, the best thing to do is accept and obey the "words of life" which come from Jesus and His men. No matter how "hard."

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Preacher Wanted

The Northside church in Trenton, Tennessee is in need of a preacher to work with them. If interested, contact Larry Stephens, 5113 Briarwood Cove, Milan, TN 38358; (901) 686-0461 for more information.

THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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