

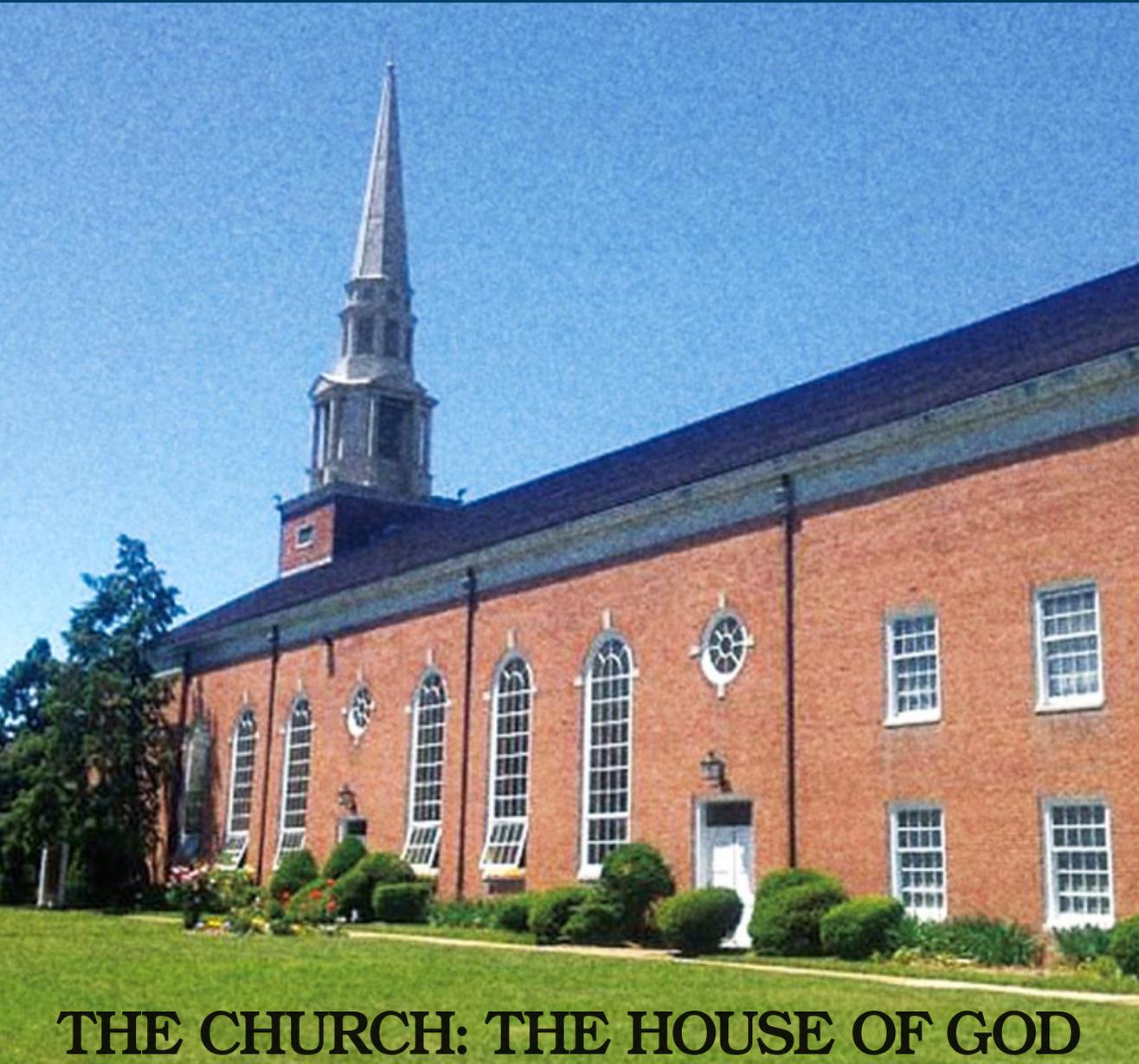
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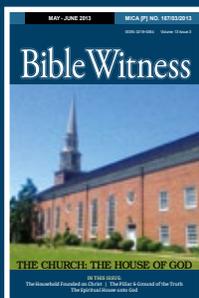
Bible Witness



THE CHURCH: THE HOUSE OF GOD

IN THIS ISSUE:

The Household Founded on Christ | The Pillar & Ground of the Truth
The Spiritual House unto God



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About the cover

The Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood in New Jersey, USA, where the late Rev Dr Carl McIntire worshipped and ministered. *Photo by Andrew Koh.*

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editorial

Dear Reader,

Once again, we are publishing articles on the doctrine of the church. They are adapted from the public lectures held as part of Gethsemane BPC's Silver Jubilee Thanksgiving. The first lecture, *The Household Founded on Christ*, was delivered by Quek Suan Yew (Pastor of Calvary Pandan B-P Church); the second by Jeffrey Khoo (Pastor of True Life B-P Church, and Principal of Far Eastern Bible College) was *The Pillar & Ground of the Truth*, and the third, *The Spiritual House unto God*, was delivered by the editor. I am grateful to my honourable friends who co-laboured with me in declaring God's precious truths concerning His church.

There is a great need to insist that the church is God's appointed institution on earth to gather His redeemed through the preaching of the Gospel, and to edify and prepare them for His impending return. Christians must regard the church as "the household of God" where the saints of God come together before His very presence. It must be their foremost desire as "lively stones" to be built up together as a church, according to the biblical revelation of her divine design.

It is very unfortunate that some Christians have abandoned the church to form other Christian organisations and institutions. Some who remain in the church remodel her according to contemporary culture and philosophies. In this conundrum, the church and her divine design are increasingly forsaken by Christians. She is losing her testimony as the house of God and is becoming a temple of the world. Oh what a shame! When the church is not built upon the Scriptural foundation, with Christ as its corner stone, she becomes a defiled and crumbling house. Oh that the church may be restored as the house of God – to be a pure and powerful witness to the world!

On a separate note, we are delighted to announce the 7th Bible Study Retreat organised by the Bible Witness Media Ministry. (Please refer to the back cover for details.) God willing, we will study the book of Jonah from the perspective of God's work on an unwilling prophet. Surely the Lord will bless us with His truth. Please register quickly. I also covet your prayers for all of its planning and preparation.

*"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages,
world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).*

Joyfully in His service,
Prabhudas Koshy

Now therefore ye are
no more strangers
and foreigners, but
fellowcitizens with
the saints, and of the
household of God;

And are built upon the
foundation of the
apostles and prophets,
Jesus Christ himself
being the chief
corner stone;

Ephesians 2:19-20

The Household Founded on Christ

Quek Suan Yew

Christianity has spread all over the world. The church that first began like a tiny mustard seed (with the twelve apostles and a few believers) has grown over the last 2000 years to be what it is today. It has grown far and wide, and can now be found on every continent on earth.

Today, Christianity has many faces, and we call these faces denominations. Some of these denominations used to stand true and firm on the Lord Jesus Christ but have changed their faces with the passage of time.

Consider the Roman Catholic church which has more than a billion members. Is this billion-strong Roman Catholic church

a picture of what true Christianity ought to be? Doubtless, it is grand, it is big; its cathedrals boast spectacular architecture. Millions and millions of dollars have been spent in the construction, maintenance and care of those glorious and mighty buildings. Is this what the household founded on Christ should look like? Do the grandeur and pomp of its many religious festivals define the church of Jesus Christ?

Then, there is Protestantism with its various denominations, the largest of which is probably the Anglicans. Now they are making attempts to go back to Rome. More than a few of its archbishops, who preside over more than 60 million of its members throughout the world, have said that it is not possible for God to allow hundreds of thousands of people to be killed by a tsunami. Some other Anglican leaders even deny the resurrection of Christ.

Another face of Christianity is the charismatics, the fastest-expanding church movement the world has ever seen. It began around 1906, and has dominated Protestant Christian churches in slightly over a hundred years. Undeniably, their growth in size and numbers has given them the strongest voice.

Another Protestant church is the Bible-Presbyterian church. From what we have seen, even while our founding father Rev Timothy Tow was alive, it splintered into many different groups of different shades and sizes, with different doctrines, forms of worship, behaviour, etc. All of them have the same denominational name, and yet are very different from one another.

These are some of the many faces of Christianity. Is any of these the household founded on Christ?

WHAT IS THE HOUSEHOLD OF CHRIST?

IT IS THE TRUE CHURCH

The household founded on Christ has to be the true church. The local churches are very important to God because since the day of Pentecost, God has replaced Israel with the local church (Romans 11) – which is the gathering together of the redeemed in Christ – as His witness in the world. Israel had been God’s national witness but when Israel rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, God replaced her witness with the local church. The true church is founded on Christ, and it is the household of God. From the early beginnings of the local church (the church that is visible) in Jerusalem, it has spread beyond Judea to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. This blueprint of the birth and growth of the church was prophesied by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in Acts 1:8. The local churches represent the Lord Jesus Christ just as Israel had during the time of the Old Testament. Israel, as a nation, no longer points the world to Christ. So God raised up the church to do so.

The Scriptures declare in Ephesians 2:19-20 – “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”

ITS EDIFICE: THE GATHERING OF THE SAINTS

The church is not the building that you are seated in. The church always refers to the people, not the physical building or a piece of land. The local church is the people of Christ who are gathered in a particular place. When the people leave the church building, what remains is just an empty room.

In verse 19 of our text, we are told what the household of God is – the church. Firstly, we are told that the people who make up the church or the household of God “are no more strangers and foreigners”; but to whom are we strangers and foreigners? Not to this world. We were strangers and foreigners to God, to the people of God, and to the things of God, for we were once very much at home and very familiar with the things that are of this world.

Ephesians chapter 2 describes our condition when we were strangers and foreigners to God. Verse 3 says, “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” That was precisely what we were. Verse 5 says, “we were dead in sins”. Sin ruled us in such a fashion that we were dead in it. We thought that life was all about enjoying the pleasures, lusts and the glory of physical things. Our ambitions and goals were carnal pleasures and earthly glory. We had no real appreciation for the things of God. We were so uncomfortable with the things of God. That made us strangers to Him.

Foreigners are like sojourners. The difference between strangers and sojourners is this: if you go to a country for the first time, everything will be strange to you. However, if you were to stay there long enough, you would be familiar with the food, culture, thinking and way of life. But as long as you are not a citizen, you would be called a sojourner. You may be familiar with everything that they do in the country, but you are not part of them. You are like a “permanent stranger”.

Now our situation is reversed because God tells us that “ye are no more strangers and foreigners” to Him, but to the world. Previously, when we were not born again, we fulfilled the lusts of the flesh. Whatever our mind wanted, we pursued it. We did not care how many lives we had hurt and destroyed. We just wanted to get what we lusted after. When we behaved in this manner, we were really strangers and foreigners to the things of God, which is now no longer the case.

The second description of those who make up the church or the household of God is that they are “fellowcitizens with the saints”. How does a person become a fellowcitizen? The Bible explains to us in Ephesians 2:1 – “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” The sins that we had committed proved our spiritual death. Hence, we were dead in our trespasses and sins. But verse 5 says that even when we were dead in sins, God quickened us together with Christ. God has made us spiritually alive and opened our spiritual eyes to see our dire state of sin and condemnation that we may look to Christ for our salvation.

Once upon a time, when we looked at the church, we had no feelings towards it. We hear the name Jesus Christ, but it was meaningless. We remained cold and aloof to the things of Christ. But now, the name Jesus Christ, the words of Christ, the hymns of the church, the service in the church are all very meaningful to us. Something has happened within us. It is the work of God. God has quickened us. We are no more strangers and foreigners to the things of God, but are now called “the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19).

Now, who are the saints? The saints include all the Old Testament believers, and all who have become believers before you became one. So, the moment you accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and become a believer, you “automatically” become a fellowcitizen with the saints. A fellowcitizen simply means “a native of the same town”. In this case, it means a native of the same household of God. There is only one household of God because there is only one Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. God designs His household and has chosen us to belong to it – the church.

All of us who are believers come together and make up the church, of which the foundation has to be firm and strong.

ITS FOUNDATION

How important is the foundation of any building? We know that no matter how grand and magnificent a building is, if its foundation is weak, the slightest jolt or the slightest shake of the earth will send it tumbling down.

The foundation is crucial. Its size, depth and strength are designed directly proportional to the size of the building. A major foundation is not needed to build a little house. If one is to build a bungalow near the sea, one does not do piling or the pile will simply slip away. Unless the pile has bedrock foundation that is solid, sure and firm for the pile to anchor on, no matter how one keeps on piling, it will be of no use. Hence, what is needed here is a solid, floating foundation placed on the sand. To build a house of two storeys, for instance, a large foundation is not needed but if you want to build a 40-storey building, you must have a foundation that is able to carry its weight. In Ephesians 2:19, we have a similar description of a building that a foundation has to carry.

We have to remember that this church was redeemed and purchased by God, not with gold or silver, but with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the church is precious and very important to God. Otherwise, God would not have sent His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be publicly humiliated and suffer a horrendous death on the cross at Calvary.

Do you know that your sins and my sins put Christ on the cross? Your sins and my sins caused the crown of thorns to be pressed down over His head and His blood to flow down His face. It was your sins and my sins that caused Him to receive the lashes of the whip that tore His back into shreds. “You call yourself a king?” they mocked. They put a royal robe on Him, smote Him with their hands and laughed at Him. They humiliated Him. Our sins brought all that upon Him.

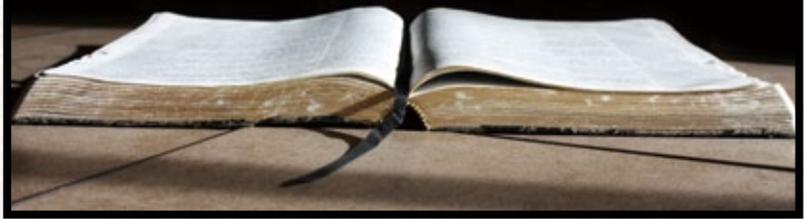
God the Father now says to you that if you want to be saved; if you want to be delivered from your sins; if you want to get yourself out of your lusts of the flesh, and the trespasses that you have been committing all your life, then come to Christ who suffered and died for sinners. And that is why Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

This is how God builds His building and how it comes together. It is called the household of God, achieved and attained for us by God Himself through sending Jesus Christ to die for us.

Will a building that is so spectacular and so precious be built on a foundation that is weak? What can be the best foundation that is able to hold up God's church and allow it to continually shine forth God's goodness, grace and mercy on a wretched world in the darkness of sin and transgression?

Ephesians 2:20 describes for us the foundation: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." When God saves us, He does not immediately take us to heaven. He wants

“ IT IS NOT THE ENTERTAINMENT OF ACTORS AND SINGERS... IT IS NEITHER THE EXPERT OPINION OF SO-CALLED CHURCH GURUS, AND THEIR PROMISES OF NUMERICAL GROWTH. GOD PUTS HIS HOUSEHOLD ON A FOUNDATION THAT IS NOT MAN-MADE. HE BUILDS HIS OWN FOUNDATION... IT IS NONE OTHER THAN THE PERFECT WORD OF GOD. ”



us to remain on earth to build us up so that we will be godly; a shining light in a world filled with spiritual darkness. He wants to put us on a firm foundation that will never ever fall, no matter how the world may shake it.

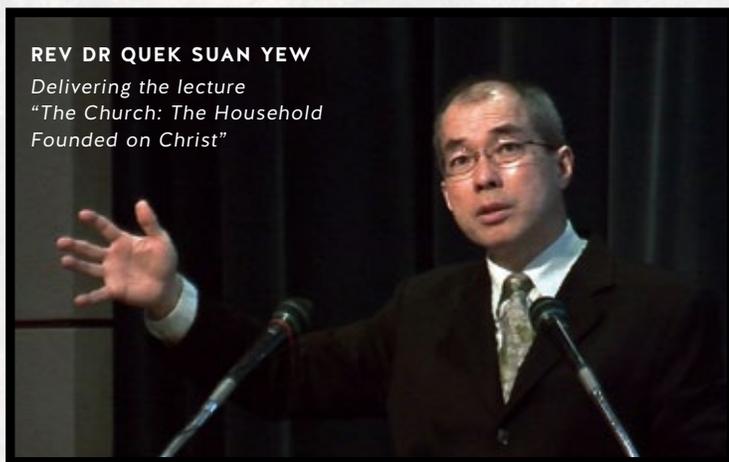
What exactly is this foundation of the apostles and prophets? Note the word "foundation" – it is one, and not many. The "apostles and prophets" here refer to all that they had taught and written in the Scriptures by the inspiration of God. They laid the foundation by giving us the Word of God. It is not the entertainment of actors and singers that lays the foundation of the church. It is neither the expert opinion of so-called church gurus, nor their promises of numerical growth. God puts His household on a foundation that is not man-made. He builds His own foundation, and God says that it is none other than the perfect Word of God.

The Word of God has existed all through the ages from the time the very first book of the Bible was written. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, except for a few portions in Aramaic; and the New Testament, in Greek. And this is the foundation – the perfect Word of God in Hebrew and Greek – the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Ironically, Satan, the enemy of Christ and His church, understands only too well that God’s Word is the foundation of the church and thus, he has relentlessly attacked it to undermine the church. This he did to deceive Eve who in turn caused Adam to sin (Genesis 3), and since then, he has never stopped doing so. Through the centuries, Satan’s minions have attacked the Scriptures, in particular the inspiration of the Word of God in the 1920s. In response, the defenders of the Word of God came up with a statement that every word is inspired by God – Verbal Plenary Inspiration.

Today in the 21st century, Satan cunningly attacks the preservation of the Word of God. So we counter his attack by teaching the biblical doctrine of Verbal Plenary Preservation. For if the foundation has mistakes and is weak and therefore crumbles, everything else will fall. Churches which believe that the Bible has mistakes will crumble and fall. There will be no confidence in studying the Bible and sharing the Gospel. They will say that the mistakes are only in the numbers and

names and do not affect any doctrine. But if God is unable to preserve something that they say is so insignificant, how can God preserve something that is great – so-called “important” verses? And did God say that He will only inspire “important” verses, that inspiration does not include names and numbers? Names and numbers are just as inspired – every jot and every tittle is the very Word of God.



REV DR QUEK SUAN YEW

*Delivering the lecture
“The Church: The Household
Founded on Christ”*

We must not have different degrees of inspiration, different degrees of perfection or different degrees of preservation. Do not be deceived. Satan is smart. He will use every means possible to crack the foundation. He had thousands of years to master the art of deception. That is why the Bible says he is the father of lies. If you believe that the Bible has mistakes, how will you build your life upon it? How will you strengthen your faith by its teachings? Every time you study it, you will have nagging doubts at the back of your mind – “Is this correct and does this particular verse have mistakes?” If you have a low view of God’s Word, you will have a foundation that will crumble and fall. And your faith, your trust, your walk with the Lord will be seriously affected. Your

salvation may not be jeopardized if you are truly born again, but your testimony will be destroyed. Satan will use you as a stumblingblock to prevent many from putting their full confidence in His Word. That is how subtle and deadly this latest attack on God's Word is.

ITS CHIEF CORNER STONE

There are many churches that use the Bible. There are those that say since they use the Bible, they are also doing well. Every church has the Bible, but not every church has Christ. And that is why the second half of Ephesians 2:20 is crucial – “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone”.

In every building, there are many corners. The first corner that you lay is called the chief corner stone because it is the point from which every other corner of the building will take its reference. That is how buildings are erected. So if I want to make sure that the walls are built at right angles to each other, I would not measure the position of a corner based on a previously positioned corner, because if I had made a slight error on the position of that corner, the error would be compounded. I would instead make sure that the position of each and every corner of the wall is calculated from the chief corner. This is so that the building will be built accurately and precisely. That is why the corner from which all other corners take their reference is called the chief corner, and Jesus Christ is called “the chief corner stone”.

However, it is not merely the mentioning of the name of Jesus Christ. It

must be Jesus Christ of the Bible. It must be the Lord Jesus that is according to the Holy Scriptures. Many people use the name of Jesus as they like. The Roman Catholics, the charismatics, the Mormons, and so many other “households” also make mention of the name of Jesus Christ. As early as the days of the writings of the apostle John, the Gnostics also use the name of Jesus Christ. The Gnostics believe that the flesh is inherently evil. They say that they believe in Jesus Christ but that He could not have come in the flesh because the flesh is evil. Hence, the apostle John taught the Christians in those days to test these Gnostics and find out whether they preached Christ in a way that contradicted what had been revealed through the apostles and prophets. The Jesus that they trusted is not the Jesus of the Bible because they said Jesus must come in the flesh. We have to be discerning.

Our lives and ministries must be built on the biblical foundation. We must study the Bible. We must know it, imbibe it and meditate upon it. That also means it has to be taught. The church must have good, solid preaching and teaching of God's Word. The pastor must be fully given to preach and teach God's Word. Follow what our founding principal of the Far Eastern Bible College had taught us: focus 24/7 on God's Word, and be a good teacher and preacher of His Word. Do not hold any other job. Do not buy stocks and shares. Just study God's Word. That is what he must do because what the congregation needs is the Word of God. He must have the highest honour and regard for the Bible, and defend it against those who attack it. Only then will the church know the Jesus Christ of the Bible. So

when God's people go out into the world, they will not be naive though they have friends, colleagues and acquaintances who will sound like Christians, talk like Christians, but are not Christians.

Jesus Christ must be the chief corner stone. Everything that you believe in must have Jesus Christ as the reference point. The chief corner stone is Jesus Christ, not your church and not Bible-Presbyterianism. It must be Jesus Christ of the Bible. He must be the chief corner stone.

That is why it is so important that you must know the Jesus of the Scriptures well. Otherwise, when a person says that he also believes in Jesus, you will not be sure of his salvation. Is he also a child of God? Is he God-honouring? Is he part of the household of God just like you are? When you talk to him more, you may realise that he is not. Can you have prayer meeting together? When you look at churches today, do they worship Jesus as though He is an entertainer? But your Jesus is not an entertainer. When you go

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THE WORD OF GOD IS THE WRITTEN WORD, AND JESUS CHRIST IS THE LIVING WORD. TO KNOW THE BIBLE IS TO KNOW CHRIST, AND THAT IS HOW CHRIST IS TO BE YOUR CHIEF CORNER STONE.

” —

to certain churches, do their worship and activities appear to be frivolous? Do they promote a materialistic lifestyle while they speak of Jesus? But your Jesus did not die on the cross to fatten your wallet. Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sin, and this should fill our hearts with

humility, gratitude and thanksgiving. If we truly want to promote and praise the Lord Jesus Christ, then He must increase and we must decrease. We do not want to be known. We only want people to know Christ – the Christ of the Bible.

The Word of God is the written Word, and Jesus Christ is the living Word. To know the Bible is to know Christ, and that is how Christ is to be your chief corner stone. Christ is always the focus of the Bible. All 66 books of the Bible can be summarised into two words – Jesus Christ. In the very beginning of the Bible, we are introduced to Jesus Christ as the seed of a woman who will bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). In the last book of the Bible, Jesus Christ is prophesied to come again on a white horse; and when He appears again, He will not be coming as a Saviour but as the King of kings and the Lord of lords who will judge sinners. In His first coming, Jesus came as the Saviour. In His second coming, the world will see the resurrected Christ for the first time – the same Christ whom they crucified. But this time, He comes as the Judge.

Whatever you may think, Jesus Christ will always be the chief corner stone. Even if you do not make Him the chief corner stone today, He is still the chief corner stone. He is the One who will measure everyone – whether he truly belongs to the household of God.

Defend God's Word. Love God's Word. It is what we need and it is all that we have that will build us up, strengthen us and keep us firm and true to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ until He returns. ■



1. Where early Christians worshipped to escape persecutors
2. What the apostle Paul did to the church before he was converted (Gal 1:13)
3. The "foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph 2:20)
4. What the church is not to be occupied with (p.24)
5. The kind of stones that believers are, according to 1 Peter 2:5a
6. The lukewarm church (Rev 3:14-16)
7. The church is described as a pillar and ground of this (1 Tim 3:15)
8. Church buildings came into existence during this century
9. The book of the Bible in which the word "church" first appears
10. The kind of sacrifices that Christians are to offer (1 Pet 2:5)
11. What the church did when the apostle Peter was imprisoned (Acts 12:5)
12. The kind of stone that Jesus is, according to 1 Peter 2:4
13. The rock upon which the church will be built (Mt 16:18)
14. Believers were first called Christians here
15. What elders are to do in the church (Acts 20:28)
16. Also called "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38)
17. The "accuser of our brethren" (Rev 12:10)
18. The woman who sent the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans
19. When Christ returns, He will come as this
20. What the church should be, having been sanctified and cleansed by the Word (Eph 5:26-27)
21. What Christ is to the church (Eph 1:22; 5:23)
22. That which Christ is chief in the household of God (Eph 2:20)
23. All who are of the church of God and sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Cor 1:2)
24. To be observed in the church if there be no interpreter of tongues (1 Cor 14:28)
25. What the church must do "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8)
26. Excelling in our spiritual gifts is for this purpose (1 Cor 14:12)
27. A man must know how to rule this before he can take care of the church (1 Tim 3:5)
28. The disciple who "was well reported of" in the churches of Lystra and Iconium (Act 16:1-2)
29. Appointed to ordain elders in Crete (Titus 1:1-5)
30. Ordained in the churches of Lystra, Iconium and Antioch (Acts 14:21-23)

THE PILLAR & GROUND OF THE TRUTH

Jeffrey Khoo

In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul said that the church is “the pillar and ground of the truth”. What is the church, and why is it the pillar and ground of the truth?

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The word “church” is a translation of the Greek *ekklesia*. This word, whenever it is used in the context of God’s people, always means a sanctified and separated people called out of the world to fulfil

God’s holy purpose. The idea of separation is thus intrinsic to this word which literally means “called-out ones”. Christians have been called out of this world of sin and Satan to become citizens of the kingdom of God and of Christ. A church is no church if it does not practise the biblical doctrine of separation (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

Now, the church is not a building in the literal sense. Biblically speaking, the church is not wood or stone but flesh and

blood. Know that there were no church buildings (with steeple and cross) in the days of the apostles of Jesus Christ. The buildings called “churches” only came into existence in the 4th century when Christianity found favour with the Roman emperor Constantine. Know also that the church before Constantine was much hated and severely persecuted by the world. In order to worship in peace, Christians had to meet quietly in homes or in caves; indeed they “(Of whom the world was not worthy:) ... wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Hebrews 11:38).

In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul described the church as “the house of God”. The “house of God” is often used in the Old Testament to refer to the temple—the physical building in Jerusalem where the Israelites worshipped God and offered their sacrifices. It is a holy place. In the New Testament, the house of God is no longer a place but a people, a holy people. The church is the house of the living God, and not a temple for dead idols. Peter said, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. ... But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

Since the church is a spiritual house of God, it must be filled with people who are not of this world—not carnal or devilish but spiritual and Christlike. The church is not—and may it never become—a

community centre (with cooking, painting, karate classes), a country club (exclusive with members-only privileges), an entertainment hub (full of rock and roll), a fashion expo (a flashy parade of the flesh) or an integrated resort (“a den of thieves”). Although the church is in the world, it is not of the world (John 17:14).

WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

Jesus said, “thy (God’s) word is truth” (John 17:17). The word “truth” (*aletheia*) here is found with the definite article. This indicates that Paul was not speaking about truth as a quality, but truth as the object of our faith. The object of our faith is the truth itself, i.e. the Word of God, the whole counsel of God, the Holy Scriptures, the 66 books of the Bible.

The truth is under such tremendous assault today that people in general no longer know what truth is any more. Like Pilate, they are asking, “What is truth?” Jesus said, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). The world today is like Pilate; they do not hear the voice of God because they do not belong to the truth and is outside the realm of truth, and hence do not know and cannot understand the truth of God and His Word. When the truth is preached and taught, they do not believe or receive it, but rather attack it.

The truth today is attacked not only by those outside the church, but also by those within the church. The truth for instance is attacked by atheists who deny that God

created the whole universe out of nothing by the power of His Word in six literal days. The atheists replace the biblical doctrine of creation with their big-bang theory of evolution. What is truly disturbing is that those who profess to be Christians are agreeing with this theory, calling it science or scientific. To them, science trumps faith. Science is for the intelligent; faith is for the weak-minded. So, for Christianity to be intellectually respectable, they mix the Word with the world and advocate a theistic evolution, i.e. God created the world through evolution.

The attack from within continues. In the name of “science” so-called, some professing Christians claim that the Bible contains mistakes and so deny that it is divinely inspired, infallible and inerrant.

history, geography and theology. They think after this manner: “If the Bible does not agree with what I can discover and observe through tests and experiments, the Bible must be wrong.” Paul has strong words for such: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; ... Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:18, 21, 22).

Another attack from within the church has come from textual critics who deny that the Bible today is 100% perfect without any mistake. They say the Bible was only infallible and inerrant in the past when it was first given, but after all these thousands of years, the Bible we now have is no longer as infallible and inerrant as before because all the manuscripts we have today are corrupted in one way or other.

They say the Bible is a good book but not God’s Word. They interpret God’s Word just like any ordinary literature. They question its origin and authorship, its

Hundreds of thousands of scribal errors have crept into our Bible, and these errors, like it or not, have affected its statements of fact and doctrine. God just did not



REV DR JEFFREY KHOO
*Delivering the lecture
 “The Church: The Pillar and
 Ground of the Truth”*

preserve the Scriptures in the way that He should. We have lost some words, and because no two manuscripts are alike, we cannot be absolutely sure what many of the original words were. It is just too bad.

But this is not what the Bible says about itself. Psalm 12:6-7 says, "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." Jesus Himself said, "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18); "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). We believe God has preserved all of His inspired words to the last jot and tittle as He promised, and by the logic of faith we can tell what and where they are.

Why should Jesus be so concerned that all of His Words to the very last letter should never disappear but always be available and accessible? It is because "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7); "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him" (Proverbs 30:5); "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4); "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). There is no better reason.

It is thus no wonder that God warns against any tampering of His Word – "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).

THE PILLAR AND THE GROUND

In these days of great scepticism and questioning of the Scriptures, even by those who profess to be members of the church, how can we tell the true church from the false? The answer is simple: The church that is faithful and true to Christ and His Word is the church that is the pillar and ground of the truth. The word for "pillar" is *stulos* which means "a supportive column". It speaks of firm or strong support. The word for "ground" is *hedraïoma* which means "foundation". It has the idea of strength, steadfastness, safety, fixedness and certainty. A strong pillar is not enough; the foundation on which the pillar stands must also be equally strong and unmovable. In other words, the church cannot afford to be flexible or fickle, unsure or uncertain concerning the truth. It is not enough for the Christian to believe the Gospel and nothing else; he must be very sure of all the inspired words of Holy Scripture and be deeply grounded on all the fundamentals of the Christian faith (Matthew 28:18-20).

The church is called to be an unwavering upholder of the truth. When the truth comes under the weight of the

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enemy's attack, the church is required to bear the truth so that it will not fall or fail. In the first four centuries, the early church upheld the truth of the perfect deity and perfect humanity of Christ in one Person when it came under attack by the Docetists, Ebionites, Arians, Apollinarians, Nestorians, Eutychians and other heretics. In the 16th century, the Reformation church defended the truth of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone against the Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation by human effort and church traditions. In the 20th century, the fundamental church upheld the truth of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures against the destructive views of liberalism, rationalism and neo-evangelicalism. Now in the 21st century, when the doctrine of the verbal and plenary preservation of the Scriptures is under attack, we find faithful believers from all over the world defending this good doctrine against postmodernism, neo-deism and neo-fundamentalism.

May the Bible-believing and Bible-defending church today fulfil its divine call to be "the pillar and ground of the truth" in the midst of rampant apostasy and treachery in these very last days just before the Lord returns. "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Corinthians 13:8). ■





5-7 September 2012 Bible Witness Retreat

This is my first time attending a church retreat, and I thank God for His grace in letting me participate in this Bible Witness Retreat at Sibu Island Resort, Johor. The study theme was "Christians as Overcomers". It was timely for me to learn and apply the truth as I have just turned to God from my backslidden days. I am thankful to Pastor Koshy for giving me this wonderful opportunity to study God's Word.

I am very thankful to God that I can come under Pastor Koshy's guidance. He taught us how a Christian ought to rely on God's strength and His power to become an overcomer of the world in the

Lord Jesus Christ. It was an interesting time of learning and I greatly enjoyed the fellowship of the brethren throughout the retreat.

Thank God for Bro Stephen who worked with such meticulous attention to make sure we were well taken care of in this whole retreat.

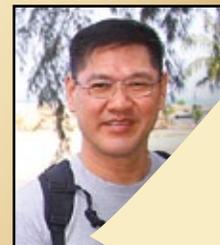
Thank God for the many friends from other churches who joined us and we had joyful moments at mealtimes.

Thank God for my roommate, Arnold, who took me on as his helper in the taking of photos and videos. He also taught me how to position the camera to get a good shot.

Thank God for sister Jessie and brethren for their encouragement, and thank God for Gethsemane B-P Church for patiently nurturing me to seek Jesus Christ as my God and my Lord.

Praise the Lord.

Jimmy Tan



Answers to **CrossWords** (p.13)

- | | | | | |
|------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. CAVES | 7. TRUTH | 13. JESUS | 19. JUDGE | 25. WITNESS |
| 2. PERSECUTE | 8. FOURTH | 14. ANTIOCH | 20. GLORIOUS | 26. EDIFYING |
| 3. SCRIPTURE | 9. MATTHEW | 15. OVERSEE | 21. HEAD | 27. HOUSE |
| 4. EXTERNALITIES | 10. SPIRITUAL | 16. ISRAEL | 22. CORNERSTONE | 28. TIMOTHEUS |
| 5. LIVELY | 11. PRAY | 17. SATAN | 23. SAINTS | 29. TITUS |
| 6. LAODICEA | 12. LIVING | 18. PHEBE | 24. SILENCE | 30. ELDERS |

The Spiritual House unto God

Prabhudas Koshy

Where can we find authentic and authoritative instruction on what the church should be? Who can tell us what a church should be like? In His Word, God has provided us with His blueprint for His church. In 1 Peter 2:5, He reveals unto us that the church is designed to be a spiritual house which offers up spiritual sacrifices unto Him. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

THE CHURCH IS BUILT BY THE LORD

Firstly, we note in our text that it is said concerning the church – "Ye . . . are built up a spiritual house". Who is the builder of the church? The Lord Jesus declared, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). What an emphatic declaration! The Lord says that He will build His own church. He builds it according to His blueprint for His own glorious purposes.

Our Lord is a great builder. Hebrews 3:4 tells us, "For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God." He is the great Creator of all things. "All things were made by him; and

without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). This great builder of heaven and earth is also the builder of the church.

God has laid the foundation of the church, and it is identified as "the apostles and prophets" (i.e. the Scriptures which they have written); and the corner stone of that foundation is Christ Himself (Ephesians 2:20). It is upon Christ and His Word that the church is to be built. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:11, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

God has also chosen the building material, the "lively stones", which are the believers. The apostle Peter reminded the believers, "Ye also, as lively stones" (1 Peter 2:5a). Believers are "lively stones" because they are united by faith to "a living stone" (1 Peter 2:4), even Jesus Christ. We are living stones only because we are being built upon the "living stone", which is also the chief corner stone of the foundation. No believer is a living stone as Christ is. Without being spiritually united to Christ, who is the corner stone of the foundation of the church and also the living stone, no one can be part of the spiritual house that is being built unto God. If we are not built

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1 Peter 2:5

upon Him, or if we do not believe on Him as the Scriptures speak of Him, we cannot be living stones.

No man should ever assume that he is the builder of the church. Man is neither the architect nor the developer of the church. We are only His labourers. In 1 Corinthians 3:9, we are reminded, “For we are labourers together with God.” Now, if we are truly labourers with God, we must know and comply with His plan for the church. Otherwise, we are just hecklers in His church. We cannot build the church in any way we want.

THE CHURCH IS THE LORD’S HOUSE

The Lord builds His church for Himself. The Lord Jesus said that it is “my church” (Matthew 16:18). The church is the Lord’s building, a place of His dwelling. Hence, as Peter said, the church is a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). The church is not a place for human pleasure or carnal entertainment. It is a gathering of God’s people to glorify Him and to do His will. It is a spiritual house unto God’s glory. In the church, no other business is to be conducted except seeking His will and doing His pleasure.

Several designations for the church in the New Testament point to the church as the Lord’s house. It is referred to as “the church of God” eight times (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:13; 1 Timothy 3:5). Three times the church is referred to as “the house of God” (1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 10:21; 1 Peter 4:17), one time as

“the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19) and also once as “an habitation of God” (Ephesians 2:22).

So the church is also called a “household of faith” (Galatians 6:10) because the Lord dwells with those who have placed genuine faith in Him. He is the head of this household, the church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23b). Genuine believers submit to His headship joyfully and willingly. In the church, everyone must acknowledge Christ as the Master of the house. In the church, we are in His dwelling place; we are in His palace, even in the presence of His throne.

In Ephesians 2:22, everyone in the church is reminded: “In whom (Christ) ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” The believers are built together through the Spirit as God’s dwelling place. In other words, every member of the church constitutes a part of His house, and together they are His habitation. Just as He dwelt in the temple, now He dwells in the church – in the hearts of His people and among them. Christ puts His Spirit in everyone who is His, that they may function as an habitation of God.

The idea of “the household of God” is linked to another title of the church in Ephesians, namely “an holy temple in the Lord”. The apostle Paul wrote, “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Ephesians 2:21). The words “holy temple” here allude to the temple which was at Jerusalem. Whether it was the first

temple which Solomon built, or the second temple (which continued to the times of the apostles) built by the returnees from Babylon, it was of great magnificence and beauty. But more importantly, it was built to be a place of holy worship. Likewise, the church is built as a spiritual temple, having believers fitly framed together in Christ, to render holy worship and service unto God.

So Paul warned the disobedient and carnal men in the Corinthian church, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:17). Again, Paul reminded the Corinthians in his second epistle to them that spiritual and moral purity is required of them in the church, for they are the temple of God. "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Corinthians 6:16). The church members must be separated from idolatry and all forms of worldliness as the Lord dwells in them, and walks in them. Since we are God's spiritual house, nothing impure or unholy should even be once named among us (Ephesians 5:3-5).

THE CHURCH'S FUNCTION AS A SPIRITUAL HOUSE UNTO GOD

1 Peter 2:5 – "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

When Peter described the church as a "spiritual house", two ideas about the church are presented together. Firstly, the church is depicted as an edifice or a building, and secondly, as a spiritual household, like the family of a priest.

A spiritual edifice consecrated to the Lord

The first concept in the designation "spiritual house" is that the church is like a spiritual edifice similar to the temple building. The church is a spiritual edifice; and the believers are the lively stones that make up that spiritual edifice. The saints in their corporate capacity are a holy temple unto the Lord.

At this juncture, it is necessary and useful to recollect the Lord's words concerning the temples of the Old Testament. He said to David who desired to build a temple unto the Lord – "Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?" (2 Samuel 7:6-7). The Lord never asked anyone to build a palace for Him. He was not earnestly seeking for a majestic edifice.

When David's son, Solomon, built the house for the Lord, God was not delighted by its beauty or glamour. The Lord declared through His servant Isaiah, "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool:

where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:1-2). The Lord was more concerned about the heart of the worshippers rather than the physical charm of the building. In the early church days, when Stephen addressed the Jews, he said, "But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 7:47-48) and he went on to quote the above passage from Isaiah the prophet (Acts 7:49-50).

When Jesus was at the temple area with His disciples, they wanted to show Him the buildings of the temple (Matthew 24:1) which Herod had renovated. It was an architectural masterpiece – a majestic building made of stones. One of them

said, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" (Mark 13:1). But the Lord did not seem to have any admiration for that architectural feat at all, for He said, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2).

If those buildings were of the greatest concern to God, He would have preserved them to this day. He destroyed them by the hands of the heathen kings and their generals when the worshippers did not keep the sanctity of worship offered within those edifices.

God's greatest concern is that His people will be a spiritual house of pure worship and faithful service. The church must strive to be a spiritual edifice and not be occupied with gorgeous architecture of buildings made with hands. The church is not about physical structures but spiritual realities. The church is not about the externals but the inner devotion of the congregation to the Lord.

A spiritual house of spiritual sacrifices

The second concept inherent in the depiction of the church as a "spiritual house" is that it is a spiritual household, "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ". Here, the apostle Peter makes a quick transition from his

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description of a spiritual building to that of spiritual service. The church is not just a formal gathering of Christians, but also a collective service of His people rendered to the glory of God.

The whole church is a priesthood; and every believer, a priest. As priests, we are to offer “spiritual sacrifices”, not “animal sacrifices”. Christ the High Priest had already offered the eternal atoning sacrifice on our behalf, so there is no need for blood sacrifices in churches today. We have no more atoning sacrifice to offer for our forgiveness because Christ had offered Himself as our perfect sacrifice. We read in Hebrews 9:14 – “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

The moment we trust in Christ, we are called into the spiritual service of the Almighty. A brief description of various spiritual sacrifices that believers should offer to the Lord is mentioned below.

The first spiritual sacrifice all genuine believers in the church are instructed to offer is the consecration of their bodies to live unto God. Romans 12:1 says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

The second spiritual sacrifice that believers should render is to praise God continually. Hebrews 13:15 instructs us, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

The third spiritual sacrifice that is mentioned in the Scriptures is to do good and to provide help to those who are in need. Hebrews 13:16 exhorts us, “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

The fourth spiritual sacrifice that is mentioned in the Bible is to win souls for Christ that they may glorify Him in worship. Paul said in Romans 15:16, “That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.”

The fifth spiritual sacrifice that we read in the Bible is the generous help to the Lord’s servants and their work for the Lord. Philippians 4:18 says, “But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.” The generosity of the church in Philippi towards the apostle Paul was an offering up of a spiritual sacrifice that was wellpleasing to God.

None of these five duties belong to an elite group of believers alone. They are every believer’s responsibilities in God’s household. No one who belongs to His spiritual house should ignore or neglect these spiritual sacrifices. As a holy priesthood, we must be diligent and faithful in our service to God. When all the believers stay together in faith as lively stones and serve together as a priesthood, the church will not only appear, but also function like a household of God. ■

BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 12

Sarah Yong

READ EXODUS 12. In this chapter, we read of the LORD's Passover that was instituted for the children of Israel. This foreshadowed God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ's death on the cross. Christ, the only begotten Son of God, came some 2000 years ago to fulfil God's redemptive plan. The Old Testament saints looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, while Christians today look back and remember Christ's atoning death on the cross of Calvary.



ANSWERS TO VOLUME 13 ISSUE 2: BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 11 & 12 (P.26)

tenth, goat, first – 

midnight, blood, pass – 

fourteenth, evening, door – 

plague, Moses, serve – 

bread, passover, hand – 

favour, raiment, Succoth – 

1

JESUS CHRIST, OUR PASSEVER LAMB

Refer to the King James Bible and complete the verses below.

John the baptizer announced this just before he baptized Christ.

"...Behold the _____ of God, which taketh away the sin of the _____" (John 1:29).

Jesus, the divine and sinless Son of God, came to bear our transgressions on Himself.

"For he hath made him to be ___ for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the _____ of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

He suffered the punishment of our sins upon the cross.

"...For even Christ our _____ is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Jesus bled and died to save us.

"...and without _____ of blood is no _____" (Hebrews 9:22).

Oh precious is the flow that washes us white as snow!

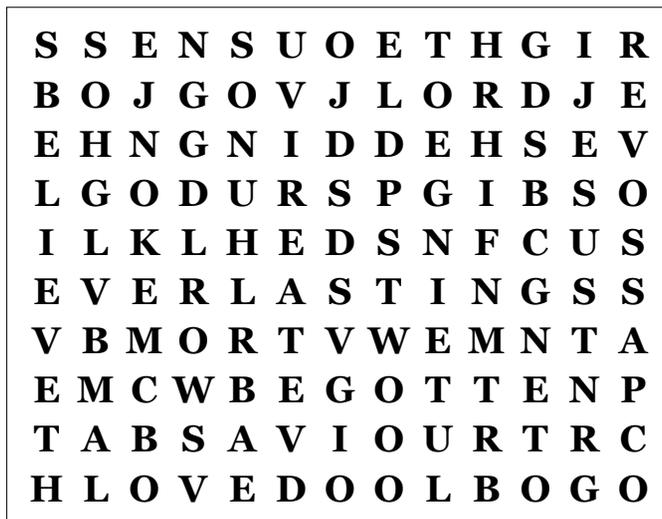
"...the _____ of Jesus Christ his ___ cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Those who accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour will enjoy His power, presence and providence. They also have the hope of life eternal in heaven with God.

"For God so _____ the world, that he gave his only _____ Son, that whosoever _____ in him should not perish, but have _____ life" (John 3:16).

2

Look for your answers in the wordsearch below. They can be found horizontally, vertically and diagonally, running in any direction.



BONUS: Can you also find 4 names or designations for the Son of God?

William Tyndale

The first man who translated the Bible into English from the original languages.

Like Thomas Bilney and Hugh Latimer, William Tyndale was a priest in England whose eyes were opened to the errors of the Roman Catholic church.

Tyndale tried to explain the biblical way of salvation to the people but they resisted him. They did not have the Scriptures in their language and they thought he was speaking his own message.

One day, when a haughty priest ridiculed the Bible, Tyndale exclaimed to him, "If God spares my life, before many years I will cause the boy that drives the plough to know more of Scripture than you."

Story retold by:
Ruth Low

Illustrated by:
Linus Kok



Tyndale was thus committed to produce a translation of the Bible in the mother tongue of the people so that they might read the Word of God for themselves.

However, he faced so much opposition that he had to flee from England to Germany. Here, Martin Luther warmly welcomed him and gave him a place to do his great work.

Within a year, Tyndale's New Testament translation in English was printed. No less than 6,000 copies were smuggled into England.



However, the authorities not only confiscated and burnt hundreds of copies, they also issued an order that anyone caught in possession of a copy would face the death of a heretic. Tyndale himself was also to be tracked down and put to death.

Tyndale managed to escape his persecutors for years, but he was at last located and betrayed by an agent from Britain who posed as his friend. This man lured him to a dark alley where he was ambushed.

He was taken bound to the Castle of Vilvorde near Brussels in Belgium and thrown into a stinking, rat-infested dungeon where he remained for 18 months.

Tyndale was then put on trial for dismissing Catholic teachings. He was condemned a heretic, had his position removed, excommunicated from the church, and finally led out for public execution on October 1536 in the prison yard of the Castle.



Having defied the final command to renounce his opinions, Tyndale was bound to the stake. His form was weak and tired. People marvelled at his patience, and everyone heard his last audible prayer: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." Tyndale wanted the King of England to see the truth, and allow the Bible to be printed and distributed in his land.

Tyndale was strangled with an iron chain before his body was burnt.

William Tyndale, aged 42, had joined the throng of martyrs. He gave his life that the commoners might have the Bible, read it, know it and be saved. Dear child, how much do you treasure and obey your Bible that cost Tyndale his life? Let us say to the Lord, "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word" (Psalm 119:15-16).



It's not just about a prophet in the belly of a fish.

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