

Scripture Standard

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST GREET YOU (Romans 16:16)

When Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in Rome, he said *'the churches of Christ greet you'*. What are churches of Christ?

His church

The Lord Jesus said that He would build His church (Matthew 16:18). He started after He rose from the dead. When Peter told heart-smitten believers to repent and be baptised for their sins to be forgiven, over three thousand people were baptised. The Lord Jesus added these to His church (Acts 2:38-41).

Every day the Lord was adding to the church those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47)

The churches of Christ

On the first day of every week they met in groups, to remember in a simple ceremony called 'the breaking of the bread' that Jesus died for them (Acts 2:42, 20:6-7).

The Lord Jesus is still building His church. He adds to it all believers who repent and are baptised in water for their sins to be forgiven. Every first day of the week, groups of them still gather together for the simple ceremony called *'the breaking of the bread'* These groups are what the Bible calls *'churches of Christ.'*

Our greetings to churches of Christ.

CHINA

(Part 1)

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell

China is some country. It is 3,696,100 square miles in size and has a population of 1,324,681,000. That's a lot of people! The country has many cities housing millions. Cities like Harbin, Dalian, Hangzhou, Kunming and Guangzhou (8,829,000). Can you honestly say you have heard of any of them?

China is now coming to the fore, but has still a bit to go to match, economically, the United States of America. But it's on its way and is moving fast. China has an annual GDP growth of around 10% and a massive trade surplus. For example, China has now foreign-exchange reserves double that of Japan, which is in second place on the chart. Up to \$1 trillion of China's foreign reserves are held in U.S. treasury bills. What would happen to the United States if China decided to sell all these tomorrow?

China's government takes the form of a single-party people's republic with one legislative house. In other words, China is a communist state. The spread of Marxism to the Soviet Union, China and elsewhere has always rather mystified me. But it's a fact, and I, therefore, have to accept it. Personally, I'm glad I live in a democratic country and not a communist one.

China today is, I believe, a world empire. Niall Ferguson has written: "...the People's Republic of China, remains in many respects an empire to this day. Its three most extensive provinces - Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet - were all acquired as a result of Chinese imperial expansion, and China continues to lay claim to Taiwan as well as numerous smaller islands, to say nothing of some territories in Russian Siberia and Kazakhstan."

Before I move on, permit me to enlighten you with another statistic. In June 2009, the number of Internet users in China reached 253 million, which meant that China had overtaken the U.S. as the world's largest population of online users. The big question is: What interests the Chinese on the Internet?

Here are the China Religious Affiliation statistics for 2005: Non-religious 39.2%; Chinese folk-religionist 28.7%; Christian 10%, of which unregistered Protestant 7.7%, registered Protestant 1.2%; Buddhist 8.4%; atheist 7.8%; traditional beliefs 4.4%; Muslim 1.5%. I am cheered by the fact that in China today there are more Christians than atheists. "Christian 10%" is not an insignificant figure given the 1.3 billion of a population.

Think of the dramatic impact on the world if China was won for Christ. Think of the dramatic impact this would have on Chinese society. Someone once said that the true measure of a country is in its religion, just as the true measure of a church is in its mid-week Bible Study Meeting. I think I agree with both of these measures.

The apostle Paul said to the Athenians: *"And [God] has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."* (Acts 17:26, 27). Yes, God is interested in the Chinese people because He made them. Indeed, God is interested in all the nations of the world because He made them all. The gospel is for all whether yellow or red or black or white or whatever. No nation is excluded from the gospel of Christ. No nation

To be continued

HOW WELL DO YOU LISTEN?

John S. Purcell, Stretford

How often when you sit there does your mind wander when someone is speaking? You aren't really listening.

When Jesus was talking about John the Baptist in Matthew 11 in verse 15 he says, *"He who has ears let him hear."* The same thing is repeated in Matthew 13 verse 9 regarding the parable of the sower, and again in verse 43 with respect to the parable of the tares. A similar statement is made in the book of the Revelation in the letters to the seven churches:

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches."

This statement is made to signify the importance of what was being said – like saying "listen to this, this is important."

I don't think that when Jesus was speaking that the way people listened was any different to those listening to the gospel today.

They don't listen or they don't listen to absorb what is being said - to understand.

Many people today do not appreciate the importance of listening well. There are three main types of listener:

1) The dull of hearing – I don't mean people like myself whose hearing is gradually disappearing but those who listen with a dull heart.

If we look at Hebrews 5 verse 11:

"We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again."

The problem was not with the material or message they were told nor was it with the presentation but was with the listener. Their heart was not right.

In Matthew 13 verses 13-15 it says:

“This is why I speak to them in parables: For this peoples heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they may see with their eyes and hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn and I would heal them.”

2) The second type of listener is those with itchy ears. In 2nd Timothy 4 verses 3 & 4, *“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”*

We have all come across this type of person. They only hear what they want to hear.

3) The third type is those with a noble and good heart.

When Jesus was explaining the parable of the sower we read in Luke 8 verse 15, *“But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.”*

The Bereans were another example of this for in Acts 17 verse 11: *“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures daily to see if what Paul said was true.”*

It is important to be a good listener. It is essential for the Christian. We have the opportunity to learn more of the

wonderful blessings available in Jesus. We can learn of things that the great men of old such as David, Daniel, Solomon, etc. didn't have the opportunity to learn.

When someone has prepared a lesson or talk it is our duty and responsibility to listen to him. He is speaking from the scriptures and we can all learn something. How often have you heard someone speak on a portion of scripture with which you are very familiar and he has looked at it in a very different way from you?

For those who do speak it is incumbent upon them to learn how to do it. We have all suffered on many occasions from an exhortation from a speaker who bored us silly, whose presentation was abysmal. Nevertheless we still have to listen attentively.

We learn by hearing the word of God preached to us.

We have to study what we have learned to gain a deeper knowledge. It requires us, as the opportunity is presented to us, to preach to others to tell them of Jesus.

What kind of listener are you? Do you always listen with a noble and good heart or do you let yourself drift sometimes.

When I started looking at this I had to look at myself and admit that I sometimes drift and that I am intolerant of long-winded speakers.

Listening like most things is learnt. It takes practice to listen properly.

One hint that I read was to keep your eyes on the speaker. It helps with concentration. If your eyes wander it is easy for your mind to wander.

Look at the passages of scripture being quoted, if you can,

to see if they are being taken out of context. (One of many preaching failings).

Let's all try to listen with a noble and good heart.

SEEKING GOD

Steven Cain

Amherst church of Christ in OH, USA

Seeking God is the wisest and most rewarding endeavour one can engage in. The Psalmist says that to deny that there is a God is "*Foolish*" Psalms.14:1. The Hebrew writer tells us that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, Hebrews 11:6. The Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Romans that God has made it impossible for us to not know that He exists.

For us to not know God requires the intervention of man who intentionally misdirects us and interferes with our searching, Romans 1:18-23. Paul dealing with the Athenians on Mars Hill, in Acts 17, tells them that even with all of the existing religious confusion and sects that were within their community, they could, with just a little effort, find and know God for he was not far from them. Acts 17:26-28. We have the same conditions existing in our communities today. With just applying ourselves we too can ferret out the true, one and only living God and the worship and life that He ordains for us today.

We can know God. We can know how to worship Him. We can know how to direct our lives in a manner pleasing to Him. God did not create the world and then sit back to have us grope about trying to figure out what we had to do to be pleasing to Him. Paul made that point very clear to the Athenians, Acts 17.

The Bible tells us the reason for all of the religious chaos existing in the world is because of man's refusal to honour Him as God and reject Him.

Paul tells us that God's wrath is being reserved for those who continue in this course of action. It was true in Noah's day. It will be true in the day of judgement.

SIGNIFICANT WORDS

Allan Ashurst, Stretford

"HAS MADE" (Acts 2:36)

When we talk about "Queen Elizabeth" we think of her role and personality but when we say "The Queen" we are using her title to signify her authority. The Bible requires us to respect her authority (Romans 13:1, 1 Peter 2:13,17).

The Jewish elite despised King Jesus' authority. The highest court in the country, the Sanhedrin, declared Him worthy of death. However two members of that Sanhedrin, Joseph of Aramathaea and Nicodemus, were secret disciples of Jesus. Nicodemus no doubt recollected that, three years earlier, he met Jesus secretly and said to Him *'we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that you do, unless God is with him'* (John 3:2).

The religious elite went to great lengths in avoiding ceremonial contamination. Tombs were painted white to make them conspicuous, so that they would not accidentally come into contact with them. Jesus' death moved them with such deep compassion that they pleaded with Pilate to be allowed to remove the body from the cross and bury it, even though being in contact with a dead body would have made them ceremonially unclean.

Joseph and Nicodemus lovingly prepared his body, wrapped it in linen and laid it in the tomb. Was this a sad farewell to their beloved Rabbi? When they rolled the stone across the entrance was this the seal of finality?

Three days later the women went to the tomb.

They did not expect to find the stone rolled away and the tomb **empty!**

Shock and horror! What had happened to their Lord?



Too often I have read familiar passages and not appreciated significant words. For example, the words *'has made'* in Acts 2:36. Seven weeks after Jesus burial Peter was addressing a large crowd in the temple precinct. He declared to them that God **had made** the same Jesus that they had executed *'both Lord and Christ.'* (Acts 2:32-36). He was risen and **was even then already enthroned** in heaven. Jesus reigns as Lord of Lords and King of Kings, He is the supreme authority in heaven and on earth - superior to all authorities. Such is His role. (Revelation 17:14, Matthew 28:18).

"WELCOME" (Gk. *Aspazomai* - to greet, to welcome.)

Another example is the second occurrence of the word *'welcome'* in Roman 16:16:

"Welcome each other with a sacred kiss. The churches of the Christ **welcome** you."

It is evident from Paul's letter to the Romans that no apostle had preached the Gospel in Rome (Compare Romans 1:11 with Acts 8:18). Even so there was already a church of Christ meeting in Priscilla and Aquila's house (Romans 16:3-5). Priscilla and Aquila had been companions of Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1-3,18-19, 24-26) and had since returned to Rome. They were evidently keen gospel preachers (Acts 18:24-26) So they might have been instrumental in starting the church in Rome. However it had not been started by an apostle.

Even though the church in Rome had not been started by an apostle that congregation belonged to Christ. It was His precious possession. When Paul wrote "*the churches of Christ **welcome you,***" he was assuring them that those called '*the churches of Christ*' recognised and **welcomed them** as a church of Christ.

Assemblies of the Christ - wherever you are - you are the treasured possessions of the King of Kings. You belong to Him whose authority is superior to that of all authorities both on earth and in heaven. His authority demands everyone's respect.

TAKE HEED PART 1 TO THYSELF

James Neil, Skelmersdale.

The Words "*take head*" are used many times in scripture both in the Old and New Testaments and each time it is used, it is followed by a warning.

Very often this warning is in regard to the need to examine ourselves before we turn our attention to other people and of course we could argue that one of the best known directives found in the whole of scripture is recorded in Matthew 7:3-5. where we find Jesus condemning the attitude of picking up on

the faults of others and being totally oblivious to our own faults which are as great or greater than those we are critical of.

Again, 1st Corinthians 10:12 warns us of the same thing. *“Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls”* and how important it is that we all do indeed *“take heed”* of these words.

O how easy it is to be critical of others and to set ourselves up as a shining example of what a Christian should be and so often in an unkind and un-Christ like manner, forgetting every warning we read in scripture that this in itself is as great a sin as the sin we are so eager to comment on which we see, or think we see in others, forgetting what we might call *“the first rule of criticism”* *“First remove the beam in your own eye.”*

Self-criticism, like any self-assessment is never easy, we see ourselves only through our own eyes and usually are biased in what we see. A good example of this is found in Luke 18:9-14. Here we are told of two men praying to God: one extols what he sees as his own virtues and thanks God that he is so much more righteous than the other man whilst the other man recognises his sins and prays for forgiveness. We know who went home with God’s Blessing!

There is nothing that gets in the way of self-assessment as much as self-righteousness!

This call to *“Take heed to yourselves”* is given to us all, and an important part of its purpose is to make us see that it is meant for us all, every single one of us, you as well as me and it is quite possible that it is the *“ME”* that we find hardest to take on board.

Paul is recorded in Acts 20:28 as giving this charge to the elders, *“Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock”* again

we see the criteria set to look inward before looking outward.

May it be that we all have the courage, commitment and faith to take heed of the word of God and to apply it to ourselves before we even attempt to tell others how they should apply it to themselves.

To be continued

TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IN JESUS

V. Sujatha, Stretford

ONE GOD - ONE BIBLE

Why are there so many churches? We have so many churches across the world. All different from one another in some way, all known to be religious bodies.

We need to spread God's word and bring people close to God so that they may be saved. But what about our fellow 'Christian' brothers in the dark?

In John 17, Jesus prayed for the unity of all believers. Out of all these so-called religious bodies which do you think is right? Every church will say their church is the right one. Jesus said that he would build his church (Matthew 16:18). Is your church of God or man-made? For you all to say that your church is the church of God cannot be true. In Ephesians 5:23 Christ compared husband/wife relationship to Christ and the church. *"The husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church"*. One wife for a husband, therefore one church of Christ. So again I ask you is your church God's church or man-made?

In all churches there will be 'fathers', or pastors or elders. When we go to church, do we blindly listen to whatever they say? They are all human like you and me. They can make

mistakes. The Bible says that the Bereans were more noble than the Thessalonians because they received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether what they had been taught was correct (Acts 17:11). Are we doing that? For once instead of listening to what people say, read for yourself from God's word, the Bible. Man can be wrong, God's word cannot. This way you can also help your fellow man to understand God's word better. Don't tell them that they are teaching wrong but advise them, showing them from the Bible what is more accurate (Acts 18:24-26). Be ready always to give an answer (1Peter 3:15). Like the Lord said to Paul:

“Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent for I am with you” (Acts 18:9,10).

To those who still didn't listen and were too blind to see the truth, the Lord said:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you: depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:21-23).

THE COVENANTS AND PROMISES OF GOD - 1

Derek L. Daniell - Tunbridge Wells

God had created the heavens and the earth and placed man in a paradise home, knowing that man would sin and could only be reconciled to Him by the death of His Son on the cross. In speaking to the serpent (Satan) who had lied to and deceived Eve, the Lord God said:

“Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field: on your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” Genesis 3:14-15.

This, was the **first great promise** that God made to man, pointing them to His Son who would be:

“wounded for our transgressions, [and] crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his stripes we are healed,” Isaiah 53:5-6. ESV.

“For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” 1 Corinthians 15:21-22.

God’s Covenant Promise to Noah

Throughout the period to Noah God spoke to the fathers in many ways through men like Enoch who walked with God and is spoken of as a prophet who warned the ungodly of God’s coming judgement upon them, see Jude 14-16. As the wickedness of man became great and the thoughts and intention of his heart was only evil God decided to blot man from the face of the earth. However, Noah, a righteous man, Ezekiel 14:14 found favour in the eyes of the Lord because like Enoch his great grand father he walked with God, Genesis 6:5-10. God made a **covenant promise** with Noah that if he built an ark according to His commands, he and his family would be saved. Faced with this great challenge of faith, Noah, while preaching a message of salvation to an exceedingly wicked people, 2 Peter 2:5 worked to build the ark and save his family, Genesis 6:13-22. His sons were born to him during this

period of 120 years, see Genesis 6:3; 10:21; 11:10.

“Thus Noah did according to all that God had commanded him”

God then established another **covenant promise** with Noah that He would never again destroy every living thing as He had done.

“While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease”.

The sign of this covenant is with us today so that “when the bow is in the sky [God] will remember the everlasting covenant” that he made.

Genesis 8:20-22; 9:8-17.



The challenge to our faith is to build our house upon a rock so that when the storms of life come it will not fall, Matthew 7:21-27. Our faith has to be an obedient faith. Like Noah we must do all that God has commanded us to do, so “corresponding to that, baptism now saves [us] ... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 3:21.

Abram is the next great man of faith with whom God made a covenant, with promises that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but were planned **“before the foundation of the world,”**

cp. Eph 1:3-5

Though God was only then beginning to reveal His plan for the redemption of mankind, Abraham looked beyond his earthly life to “the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” Hebrews 11:10.

To be continued

NEWS and INFORMATION

SPECIAL CHURCH MEETINGS

Saturday Gospel Meetings

7.00 pm

The Green Hut
538 Kings Rd..
Stretford
Manchester
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Autumn:

Please note the date changes.

September 11

Speaker to be announced

October 23 Frank Worgan

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Map:

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