

Trends

"The Top Ten Harms of Same-Sex 'Marriage'" (five this week and next):

1. Taxpayers, consumers, and business would be forced to subsidize homosexual relationships.
2. Schools would teach that homosexual relationships are identical to heterosexual ones.
3. Freedom of conscience and religious liberty would be threatened.
4. Fewer people would marry.
5. Fewer people would remain monogamous and sexually faithful.

—via Family Research Council

Leviticus 18:22: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination."

Sentence Sermons

"If everything is marriage then nothing is marriage."

—Benigno Blanco, vice-president Spanish Family Forum

Matthew 19:5: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh..."

News & Notes

Please pray for those mentioned in the announcements after services and others listed on the bulletin board in the foyer of the church building.

Pray for Alex Chambers. He moved to Tennessee. If you want to contact him his new mailing address is on the bulletin board in the foyer; e-mail is: aec7201960@gmail.com.

Please pray for Dawne. She is scheduled for eye surgery in mid-August. The doctors say it is a simple procedure. But parents are concerned when their child and the words "eye" and "surgery" appear in the same sentence!

Please pray for Alan Jones. He underwent deep brain stimulation to hopefully relieve severe facial pain. Alan held a gospel meeting for us in October 2014. He's been unable to preach for several months due to his affliction. Pray for him and his family.

Please keep sisters Virginia Brown and Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. Their faithfulness sets such a good example and gives encouragement to all! Ditto for Al (our Barnabas!).

Pray for Eric and Whitney Holk and congratulations on their recent marriage!

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people will be starting a new school year very shortly.

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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68

Denominationalism Is Unnecessary

Larry Ray Hafley



Religious denominationalism in general and Catholicism and Protestantism in particular are unnecessary institutions. *First*, if they were essential, they would be found in the Bible. Christ would have spoken of them and told us how to sustain and support them. That he did none of those things shows they are not required for the salvation of man. *Second*, there is not a single spiritual blessing in any human religion or denominational body that cannot be received outside it. There is no eternal benefit claimed by any denomination that cannot be obtained in Christ, whether or not one ever heard of any denomination.

If one lived and died as a faithful Christian, what did he lack if he never became a member of either a Protestant or a Catholic church? If one is saved by the blood of Christ by grace through faith and lives a life dedicated and devoted to the Lord, what insufficiency is in him if he never joins a Baptist church? If one is born of water and of the Spirit, and if he, as a new born baby, grows up in Christ through the word of God, of what is he deprived if he never becomes a Methodist or a Mormon? If one believes on the Lord with all his heart, confesses that Jesus is Lord, and serves God with a pure heart fervently, what does he miss if he never learns about the existence of a Presbyterian or a Pentecostal church?

In short, if it is possible to be saved and cleansed by the blood of Christ through the washing of water by the word, and if it is possible for one to be baptized by one Spirit into the body of Christ and to serve the Lord therein all the days of his life, and go to heaven when he dies, denominationalism is unnecessary.

One cannot be saved outside the body, or church, of Christ, for Christ "is the Savior of the body," the church (Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:23). All spiritual blessings in heavenly places (in spiritual realms), are in Christ (Eph. 1:3). There are no spiritual blessings outside of Christ since "all" are said to be "in" him. For one to be "in Christ," he must be in his body (for a germ to be in me, it must be in my body; it cannot be in me without being in my body). The body of Christ is the church—"the church...is his body," "the body, the church" (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18). Thus, to have all spiritual blessings in Christ, one must be in his body, the church.

One may be saved by grace, be faithful unto death, and enter heaven at last whether or not he ever enters a denominational church, thus, denominationalism is not

"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body."

Ephesians 5:23

essential to one's spiritual life or eternal salvation. The same, though, as we have seen above, cannot be said about the body of Christ. One must be in it to be in Christ where all spiritual blessings dwell (Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:16; 5:23, 30-32).

In light of the plain truth of the Scriptures, will any say that any denomination is necessary? Will any declare that the body of Christ is unimportant, insignificant, and not in any way related to the salvation of the soul and every spiritual blessing? If not, why are some of our readers in those unnecessary, non-essential bodies and outside the body of Christ?

A Question about God and Evil

Question: Please explain Isaiah 45:7 where God says, "I create evil." Does not only good come from God?

Reply: We read in Isaiah 45:7: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things." This verse raises the question: did God actually create only good?

God's original creation was very good (Gen. 1:31). Also, we are told that God "cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man" (Jas. 1:13). Since God is moral (sinless), moral evil is contrary to His very nature. God, then, does not create moral evil.

In what sense does God create evil? The NASB translates Isaiah 45:7: "The one forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all this." The word rendered by the NASB, "calamity," is the Hebrew word *rah*, which basically means "evil" (either moral or misfortune evil). God is addressing Cyrus (v. 1), the Medo-Persian king who was later to "subdue kingdoms." Specifically, he would capture Babylon because of the wickedness that prevailed in that city. God was using Cyrus as His instrument to inflict this punishment. The prophecy was uttered more than a hundred years before Cyrus was born, but it was all literally fulfilled. So, in view of the meaning of the Hebrew word in the verse, and the context of the verse, the word "evil" which God creates refers to the calamities as punishment upon wicked nations. God, therefore, does not create moral evil, but calamities or misfortunes come upon man as a result of his sin (see Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 5:12; 6:23; Jas. 1:14,15).

There are instances in the Old Testament when God brought calamity upon people as a result of their moral evil or wickedness. Because of

wickedness, God destroyed the earth with water, sparing only Noah and his family (Gen. 6:5-8). God afflicted the Egyptians with ten plagues because of

"The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."

Ezekiel 18:20

the hardness of Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 7-12). God smote the Philistines with a great discomfiture and tumors while the Ark of the Covenant was among them (1 Sam. 5:9). Hell is created by God for those who are disobedient

to His will (Matt. 25:41; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 21:8; etc.) These are examples of evil which God created—calamity, adversity, misfortune—all punishment as a result of moral evil. He did not create the moral evil. God created man a free moral agent. When man violates God's moral law, it is man, not God who is responsible for moral evil.

In 1 Samuel 16:14, we are told, "Now the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Jehovah troubled him." This verse has posed a problem for some in that they assume that this is a cause of moral evil coming directly from God. But actually, Saul's sin broke fellowship with God, and God allowed the evil spirit to trouble him. Again, this serves as an example of the evil consequences that come upon those guilty of sin or moral evil. The same truth is illustrated again in Saul's case (1 Sam. 18:10). God is the author of moral law and He is also the author of consequences which follow because of the violation of that law (1 Jn. 3:4).

Not all physical disasters today such as floods, tornadoes and earthquakes are due to sin (Lk. 13:1-5). Christians suffer in such calamities along with the wicked. Neither is it to be supposed that all suffering or affliction is the result of sin (see Jn. 9:2). In fact, Christians may suffer affliction as a means of chastisement (Heb. 12:7-9). Persecution is an example (2 Tim. 3:12). Chastisement of

Christians should motivate them to greater faith. We all suffer misfortunes in life—illness, disappointments, loss of loved ones and many more, but the Christian looks forward to heaven where none of these exist. Men do often blame God for consequences which result from their moral evil.

"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."

2 Timothy 3:12

A simple solution is not always found for the problem of evil in the world, but we do know that God does not create moral evil and we can always be assured that whatever God does is right and in harmony with His moral character (Gen. 18:25).

- by Hoyt H. Houchen