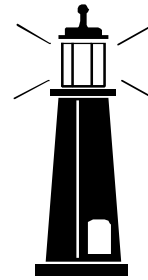


The Berryville church of Christ

# Bible Beacon

"Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105)



Volume 2, Issue 21

May 25th, 2003

## IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST A CULT?

Kevin Cauley

It has not been too long ago when I heard a report of someone accusing the church of Christ of being a cult. Now before I even address the question of the church of Christ being a cult, let me first state that the person who made the accusation does not understand the description, "church of Christ." In fact, any time someone uses the phrase "church of Christ" in such a way demonstrates that he or she really thinks that the church of Christ is a denomination. Such of course is a misrepresentation because the church of Christ is not a denomination. That phrase is merely a description for the people of Christ worshipping at some location. I dare say that the person who made this accusation would call the church that belongs to Jesus, a cult. So I am sure that when the accusation was made, the individual in question assumed that in referring to the "church of Christ" he felt like he was speaking of some denomination. With such in mind, let's consider the matter further.

When one thinks of a cult, of what does one think? The first thing that pops into my head is a single living charismatic person who controls everything his or her devotees practice. You identify the cult by the name of its leader: David Koresh, Jim Jones, Harry Krishna, etc. Of course, if having a single charismatic leader in and of itself meant that you are a cult, then almost every denomination that is out there would be a cult. The one man "pastor" system is one of the most common practices among Protestant denominations. Some of these denominational leaders even exercise cult-like power over their members. I heard a story of one who told his members that singles

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## Kevin's Korner

Last week was another good week for the Cauley family. Monday took us to Quigley's Castle to visit Glenn and to get some church business done regarding our VBS sign. You may have noticed the sign already. The sign shop that made it was in Harrison and so we made a little trip. While the sign has dates on it, the sign shop said that we could get them changed for next year's VBS at considerable less cost. We had the sign in the auditorium Wednesday night, but then Clay Bozarth came out Thursday morning and put it up. He did an excellent job! Be sure to tell him thanks for his work in this regard.



Austin and Charlie both had baseball this week. Austin played a game Monday and Friday. Charlie had his first practice this past Monday and he will play his first game Tuesday of this week. It is so fun to sit and watch the little one's play T-Ball. The rules to this game are simple. Everyone gets to hit and everyone gets to run to the bases. There are no strikes and outs and there is no keeping score. Everyone wins because it is just about having fun. Of course, that is the way we should look at all sporting events.

Mary Lynn and I are going to be getting ready for a garage sale this coming weekend (Friday and Saturday). We have never had a garage sale before, that is, as a married couple, so it is going to be a new experience. My mother used to have garage sales frequently when I was a child and I remember them fondly. I also remember the amount of work that my mother put into getting ready to have one. She and Dad were always up very late, before, during, and after the sale. We have placed an ad in the local newspaper, so if you have any items that you would like to put in our garage sale, please let us know and we will be happy to include them in the sale.

## A Recently Raised Question

Last week in our Bible class a question was raised about a statement that I made in my preaching respecting the context of a verse. The question was raised publicly, so I feel that it is appropriate to answer the question publicly in this bulletin. At first, I did not remember the statement to which the questioner referred. However, another person reminded me later. The sermon which elicited the question was "Christian Sobriety." In that sermon it was shown from the scriptures that a Christian must practice sobriety (1 Thess.5:6-9; Titus 2:11, 12) of the mind, body, and spirit. It was regarding sobriety in relationship to one's body that the question was raised.

In discussing sins that are related to the body, I spoke concerning the need for the Christian to properly care for the body. I said that the Christian should practice positive aspects of caring for the body, ensuring that it receive the proper rest, exercise, and nourishment. Then I stated that the body must not be abused. I said that a Christian can abuse his or her body through the improper use of drugs and through fornication. When I spoke concerning drugs, I spoke concerning both those that are legal and illegal. The drugs of which I spoke which are legal were alcohol and nicotine (tobacco). I stated in my sermon that using these drugs were sinful for the following reasons: 1) They are addictive and it is a sin to be addicted to anything (Romans 6:16; Matthew 6:24). 2) They are harmful to the body and it is a sin to deliberately harm the body (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Romans 12:1, 2). 3) They are costly and it is a sin to inappropriately use the blessing of prosperity for such (Ephesians 4:28; Acts 20:35; Hebrews 13:16). 4) They are time consuming and it is a sin to inappropriately use our time for such (Ephesians 5:15, 16; Romans 13:11-14).

In discussing the specific idea that it is a sin to harm the body, I cited 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. This is the passage under question. I did not say that I was "taking this verse out of context." I did say that I was taking this verse out of its original contextual application and making another application of the verse. There is a big difference between the two statements. It is wrong to take a scripture out of context and misapply it. It is not wrong to take the principle used in a specific scripture and apply it to another situation. If that were wrong, then no one would ever be able to apply the Bible to their own personal life because none of the Bible was written directly to us and any time we would cite the Bible in support of our activities, we would be taking it out of its original contextual application. Such thinking is wrong.

The fact of the matter is this. God originally wrote the New Testament through inspiration of his apostles and prophets. Some of these writings were written to deal with specific situations in the church. The book of First Corinthians is one of those writings. This book dealt with very specific issues within the church including the issue of fornication which is the context of 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. However, Paul used timeless principles to show that the sin of fornication was wrong. The principle that Paul used may also be used to discuss other issues that affect the body. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and we must glorify God therein. Anything which works to defile God's temple is sinful. Fornication is one of those things, but there are others, among which is the ingestment of drugs. I stand by my words without apology.

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who were part of that congregation had to get the "pastor's" permission before they could go out for the evening. In sharp contrast to this type of system, churches of Christ do not have a one-man "pastor" rule. In contrast we have a plurality of men referred to as elders (also called shepherds and overseers in the Bible, Acts 20:17, 28) which serve as the leadership for the individual congregation. The preacher within churches of Christ has no authority beyond teaching and preaching God's word. If the church of Christ is a cult based upon this standard, then more so are the denominations.

The second thing that comes to mind is brainwashing. This is usually done by isolating the cult members from the rest of society, controlling their communications, and feeding them on an exclusive diet of whatever doctrine the cult is propagating. Through this technique an individual can be programmed to believe whatever the cult leadership wants the individual to believe. In contrast, I personally know of no preacher or leader within the churches of Christ who practice such a technique. In fact, the Bible teaches just the opposite and so we preach. The Bible says that Christians need to be in the world in order to be lights of the world (Matthew 5:14). In my preaching, I encourage our members to participate in community activities such as civic organizations, pancake breakfasts, volunteering at schools, enrolling children in baseball or soccer, or being members of the local community center. Involvement in any wholesome community activity is something which cults discourage their members from doing. We also encourage our membership to question the preacher. Our standard from right and wrong is the Bible and not some individual. If the preacher is not preaching what the Bible says, then he needs to be questioned and challenged. This is not how things

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**Elders:** Clay Bozarth, Leon Duncan, Bruce Foster, Bill Fort, Glenn Quigley

**Deacons:** Ken Smith, Brent Stevens, Rusty Windle.

**Preacher:** Kevin Cauley 870-423-6707

### Times of Worship and Study

Sunday Morning Bible Class:.....9:30 AM  
Sunday Morning Worship:.....10:30 AM  
Sunday Evening Worship: .....6:00 PM  
Ladies Bible Class:.....10:30 AM  
Wed. Evening Bible Class: .....7:00 PM

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work in many denominations. In many places, what the preacher says, goes and if you challenge the preacher then your allegiance is questioned. If the church of Christ is a cult based upon this standard, then more so are the denominations.

The third thing that comes to mind is a group of people who claim to be the sole proprietors of certain "mysteries," which if you want to understand what they are, you must join their group. I would say that the Klu Klux Klan, the Masons, and other "secret" organizations fall into this category. These exercise cult like power among their members and encourage them to believe their "mysteries." In contrast, the Bible teaches that anyone can come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). This is what I preach and teach and most other gospel preachers I know preach and teach the same thing. There are **no** "mysteries" that you can **only** understand **only** if you attend the church of Christ. In contrast, the Bible teaches that it is a book that can be understood just like any other book can be understood, that it is not hard to understand, and that if we sit down and read it, we can understand exactly the meaning that those who wrote it intended (Ephesians 3:3-5). In fact, the Bible says that the mystery that once existed in the word of God has now been revealed so that all can know God's saving truth (Romans 16:25, 26). The Bible requires you to believe nothing but the truth that is revealed within it and that is what I and most preachers I know, teach. On the other hand, I have heard many a denominational preacher say that the Bible cannot be understood and that in order to interpret it correctly you had to listen to him and him alone. I have heard many speak about the "mysteries" that are within the gospel and heard many say that they only have the key to understanding them. If the church of Christ is a cult based upon this standard, then more so are the denominations.

## Sunday's Sermons

For May 25th, 2003

**Morning**..... **Marriage and Divorce**

Scripture ..... Matthew 19:3-6

**Evening**..... **The Right Decisions**

Scripture ..... Deut.30:19, 20

The bottom line is, there is no valid evidence to prove that the churches of Christ are cults. So what is the motivation for individuals saying that the "church of Christ" is a cult? Their motivation is simply this: they don't like the church of Christ and they don't want others to listen to the preaching of the gospel. So, they make up names and doctrines and ascribe them to the church of Christ as "straw-men" in an effort to dissuade as many as possible not to listen to faithful preachers, teachers, elders, and members. Their sole concern is to get you to believe something about churches of Christ that is simply not true. Now judge for yourself; is this the way a Christian behaves, or is this the way a cult member behaves? Christians, true Christians, have nothing to fear from those who are teaching the Bible. However, those who are not teaching the Bible have everything to fear from those who are. I challenge you, dear reader, to examine all the doctrines that all the different "churches" are teaching and compare them to the Bible. You will find that the Bible is always right, and those who are following the Bible are clearly recognizable. You will also find that there are many that have gone astray. If the church of Christ is following the Bible in your community, then become a member. If it is not, then find one of Christ's churches that are faithfully doing so. In so doing, you will not go wrong, and will never be a member of a cult. You will be a member of the church that the Bible talks about, the church that belongs to Christ, the church of Christ.

**WE'RE GLAD  
YOU'RE HERE  
TODAY!!!**

## Our Record

Week of May 18th

Sunday Class .....	57
Sunday A.M. ....	66
Sunday P.M. ....	50
Wednesday .....	59
Contribution .....	\$1524.90
Budget.....	\$1760.00

## News, Notes and Prayer List



- We welcome all of our visitors. We hope you stay around to meet us.
- Last Sunday morning, Peggy Blackston came forward to confess fault. She is now forgiven. Please pray for her.
- Please remember the following in your prayers: Brian Guess, Larry Miller, Glenn Quigley.
- Edith Mischler is in the nursing home in Eureka Springs.
- Art Roberts and Mary Patterson are confined to their homes.
- Sunday night we will have our youth devotional at the Duncan's house.
- VBS is less than a month away! Put June 16th-19th on your calendar today! Our goal is 100 average attendance.
- Friends and Family Day is June 8th! Our goal is 125. Let's meet it and exceed it.
- Children's home change cans are in the back. If you have not yet picked one up, then please do so.
- The Children's home truck will be coming soon. Please make your pantry donations soon.
- Tonight we will be putting together House to House for mail out. Please stay for that effort.
- If you have not signed up to provide lunch for Art Roberts, that opportunity is available for you. The list is posted on the bulletin board in the back.
- Next month's assignments are as follows: Leon Duncan has announcements. Dale Pinkley and Clay Bozarth are assigned to carry communion. Neva Welch and Donna Henderson are assigned to prepare communion. Glenn Williams will be the worship coordinator.
- The Pantry Item for this week is Cream of Chicken.



## Men to Serve

	<u>Today</u>	<u>Next Week</u>
<b>Sunday Morning:</b>	<b>May 25th, 2003</b>	<b>June 1st, 2003</b>
<b>Song Leader:</b>	Larry Elliott	Ken Smith
<b>Preacher:</b>	Kevin Cauley	Kevin Cauley
<b>Opening Prayer:</b>	Clay Bozarth	Matt Bassing
<b>Scripture:</b>	Brent Moore	Ray Duncan
<b>Lord's Table:</b>	Leon Duncan	Brent Stevens
	Bill Fort	George Eddings
<b>(assist)</b>	Sandy Nieves	Jack Gentry
	Brandon Foster	Rusty Windle
<b>Closing Prayer</b>	Matt Bassing	Bill Fort
<b>Sunday Night:</b>		
<b>Songs:</b>	Rusty Windle	Clay Bozarth
<b>Preacher:</b>	Kevin Cauley	Kevin Cauley
<b>Opening Prayer:</b>	Larry Elliott	Glenn Williams
<b>Scripture:</b>	Ken Smith	Brandon Foster
<b>Lord's Table:</b>	Ray Duncan	Dale Pinkley
	George Eddings	Matt Bassing
<b>Closing Prayer</b>	Bob Moore	Bruce Foster
<b>Wednesday</b>		
<b>Songs:</b>	Glenn Williams	Hugh Atchley
<b>Opening Prayer:</b>	Rusty Windle	John Gass
<b>Invitation:</b>	Brent Stevens	Kevin Cauley
<b>Closing Prayer:</b>	Dale Pinkley	Leon Duncan
<b>Monthly Assignments</b>		
<b>Announcements</b>	Rusty Windle	
<b>Worship Coordinator</b>	Bruce Foster	
<b>Communion Prep</b>	Mary Lyn Cauley	Katie Williams
<b>Communion Carry</b>	John Gass	Glenn Williams

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