

THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS MESSENGER

March 15, 2009

A Response To A Baptist Pastor--1

Some time ago I was introduced to an Internet tract written by Pastor David Martin of the Solid Rock Baptist Church in Bartlett, Tennessee. The title of Mr. Martin's tract is "Common Sense Questions A 'Church of Christ' Preacher Cannot Clearly Answer." I have answered Mr. Martin's tract. I was able to get in touch with him and he indicated that he intended to respond to my answers. Thus far I have not received those responses.

For the next several weeks I will be listing Mr. Martin's questions along with my answers. Perhaps you may find that this will make good resource material and may help you in conversation with friends or acquaintances with a Baptist background. All of Mr. Martin's words will be *italicized* and I will insert them exactly as he wrote them so as not to misrepresent anything that he has said.

Question 1- *"According to the history of the 'Church of Christ,' God used certain men to 'restore' the New Testament Church in the early 1800's. **Where was the true New Testament Church before then? Jesus said that the gates of hell would not prevail against his church (Matthew 16:18). What happened to the church and where was the truth it was responsible for preaching before God restored it?**"*

We need to understand something at the outset: the New Testament church has existed since the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 when Peter exercised his right to be the first to use the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:19) in the first gospel sermon preached in Jerusalem. The church has been in existence since then and was found wherever a group of Christians agreed to gather together to worship and serve the Lord in the way that He instructed in the pages of Scripture.

One thing that I think people tend to forget is that the Lord never promised an unbroken string of success for the church. He never promised that it would continue to flourish as it did at the very beginning, and He never promised that there would not be dark and difficult days for His people. In fact, some things jump out at you as you read the words of the Holy Spirit to Christians. For instance, **"In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood"** (Hebrews 12:4). Consider Jesus' words to the church in Pergamum. **"I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells"** (Revelation 2:13). Clearly it was not all going to be sunshine and smooth sailing for the church, and such has been the case throughout the years. Then again, Jesus never promised that it would be these things. He *did*, however, promise that His word would never pass away (Matthew 24:35). The church has and always will exist within the seed of the truth, which is the Word of God.

Mr. Martin writes from a very sectarian perspective when he speaks of the “history of the Church of Christ.” When he mentions the early 1800’s he is speaking of what is commonly referred to as the Restoration Movement. In a nutshell, a desire to accept the Bible alone as the sole authority for all things religious swept across the country. Many churches abandoned their creeds and rules of faith to return to that sacred ground found only within the Scriptures. This led many to go *back* to the church of the first century. However, this movement certainly did *create* “the churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16). Yes, many churches were restored to New Testament Christianity in the 1800’s, but the church was obviously not established in the 1800’s.

I will continue to list Mr. Martin’s questions and answer them over the next several weeks. If you have any questions about the answers, or have an answer yourself that I did not consider, please do not hesitate to bring it to my attention. Because it is the Christians responsibility to always be prepared to give an answer, it is vital that we know what our religious neighbors believe and how to answer any questions or arguments that they might bring our way. My prayer is that the next several bulletins will help to put us in a better position to be able to do that.

Passage to Remember

“Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the field yields no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herds in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deers; he makes me tread on my high places.” Habakkuk 3:17-19

In Need of Prayers	General Information
<p>Remember Ron Tirey as he recovers from his surgery. Ron has been able to attend with some regularity lately. However, those efforts are still exhausting for him.</p> <p>Remember Evan Powell who was taken to the hospital last Wednesday and continues to recover.</p> <p>Let’s remember Jean Harris who was hospitalized. What was first thought to be cancer turned out to be a non cancerous mass. That’s fantastic news!</p> <p>Keep in mind that we have wonderful opportunities to demonstrate our love and concern for the brethren by being there for them during difficult times. Have you asked them if you can help somehow?</p>	<p>Shortly we will be updating the church directory. When the time comes each member will be asked to verify that their information is correct or to make any necessary changes. The sheets with each members information will be placed in the back for a period of two months. After that the information will be taken up and the directory updated.</p> <p>The informational meeting for the entire congregation will be next Sunday at 5. Please make your plans to attend.</p> <p>Can you think of any members who may be in special need of spiritual encouragement? If so, why not be the one who offers it to them?</p>

