

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
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Madison Heights, VA 24572



MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

No. 9

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The Word of God

When I first joined a Disciples of Christ church I was told that the leaders objected to the concept of creeds from the very beginning. At the time that really didn't mean a lot to me. What I was hungry for was a church where the Bible is the standard of doctrine. What appeals to me about the Disciples of Christ is that the Bible is the foundation for all of our doctrine. It was later that I learned that the Disciples objected to the concept of creeds because creeds would formulate a belief that would sometimes be different from what the Bible teaches. How we got to be a denomination that worships in Spirit and in truth comes from the real life experiences of Barton Stone, Thomas Campbell, and others.

The experience that Barton Stone faced occurred while he was seeking ordination. The Presbytery asked if he accepted the "Westminster Confession of Faith." Stone replied, "As far as I see it consistent with the Word of God. For Stone, myself, and many others, the Bible is *The Word of God*. Meanwhile, Thomas Campbell was accused in the Presbytery of teaching things that were not in agreement with the rules of the church. This caused him to question the organization of the church and its insistence upon a written creed as the standard of faith and action. His perspective was that people should go to the Bible for answers. The Bible is where we should look to find the answers to all of the doctrinal issues that we face. Therefore, Campbell was also opposed to emphasizing human creeds over the Bible.

God does not confine the understanding of the Bible to some select priest or church, the Bible itself is the supreme book of religion any other approach is lost in speculation. The Bible is understandable and there is no hidden meaning. The text is interpreted and understood by the same interpretation as ancient writings are translated and understood. Therefore, there is no class of inspired people required to reveal true meaning to humanity. God reveals God's self in the Bible through real human beings. The more we understand these writers, the compulsions, and conditions under which they were writing, the better we can understand God through them.

Jesus Christ is the central figure of the Bible. The early disciples expected that this approach to the Bible would solve the problem of division in church and produce unity. Whereas, human opinion will divide the people of God because human opinions differ, it is the right of each individual to express a private interpretation of the scriptures. The principle of unity is a main lesson of the Bible. With this simple plan for studying the Bible and doing what it says it seems logical that everyone would want to get on board. However, some believed that that the Bible contains all of the information and inspiration that the church will ever need. Therefore, what the scriptures do not explicitly teach was prohibited for them. They did not avoid the pitfall of literalism and expected more from the Bible than it promises. Whereas what is now known as The Disciples of Christ saw that which is not prohibited is permitted. This is why I became a Disciple of Christ; the Bible is *The Word of God*, with emphasis on intellectual human interpretation over human doctrine.

George