

### Schedule of Meeting Times:

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM  
Study Sunday 10:00 AM  
Worship Sunday Morn 11:00 AM  
Worship Sunday Eve 5:00 PM  
*Singing every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday evening*  
Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

### Preacher / bulletin editor:

Kris Vilander, (256) 472-1065

E-mail: kris@haysmillchurchofchrist.org

Website: www.haysmillchurchofchrist.org

*“And He put all things in subjection under [Christ’s] feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all,”*

—Ephesians 1:22,23



### Servants during March/April:

**Songleader:** Stanley (31), Larry (4/7), Dwight (14), Stanley (21), Larry (28)

**Reading:** Stanley; Mike M (Apr)

**Announcements:** Larry; Stanley (Apr)

**Table:** Mike M, Larry, Marty, Stanley; Larry, Mike M, Marty, Stanley (Apr)

**Wednesday Lesson:** Larry (27), Stanley (4/3), Kris (10), Larry (17), Stanley (24)

**Lawn Mowing (week starting):** Stanley (31), Larry (4/7), Kris (14), Marty (21), Stanley (28)

**Area Meetings: Jones Road, 4/7-10,** Steve Klein; **Jordan Park, 4/21-24,** Cody Hairston; **Bethel, 4/1,8,15,22,29**

### Hays Mill church of Christ

21705 Hays Mill Road  
Elkmont, AL 35620

# The Bible . Examiner

*“Examine everything carefully...” –1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB*

Volume 6

March 31, 2024

Number 43

## “The Kingdom is Like...” Figures Describing God’s People

*by Robert F. Turner*

Is the church (God’s people) the “body of Christ,” Eph 1:23; or is it LIKE (in some respects) a “body,” and since He is “head over” these people, therefore, LIKE the body of Christ? Are we **literally** His hands, feet, etc., or are we **figuratively** His body? To ask such questions is to answer them in any sane mind. Yet, many seem reluctant to apply common sense reasoning to Bible figurative language.

The most common and effective way to teach an unknown is to compare it to something known. The common simile says this is like that. “His remark was like a knife”—it cut, figuratively; or, it had a point, or, it was mounted on a handle. The exact use is left to the user, and is usually indicated in the context. When the comparison is made to an event or

happening this is called a parable, or a fable (depending on the type of “story” told as illustration). In some figures of speech the “like” is omitted (“tell that fox,” Lk 13:32) or is a deliberate exaggeration (running “like lightning”); but all convey a message limited by context and intent. Metaphorical language is so common it is practically inseparable from communication. We use it all the time, and I just finished using it. (“All” the time? or just much of the time?)

One need not know the names or the technical descriptions of figures in order to properly use and interpret them. It doesn’t take a genius to know we do not drink a container; or that Jesus, holding bread in his hand as he spoke, did not mean “this is [literally] my body,” 1 Cor 11:23-25. Bread and fruit of the vine **symbolize** or

represent the body and blood of Christ. But symbolism, a form of figurative language, is also subject to the limitations placed upon it by the author. We have no right to alter the elements of symbolism established by the Lord and the Holy Spirit, or to place significance upon circumstances or details which were given no significance by divine authority.

Some figures seem to invite unauthorized extension more than others. The “kingdom” figure is much abused by repetition of the Jewish materialistic concept. Some expect Christ to sit on the literal chair of David, ruling over a “this world” realm. His teaching concerning the nature of His kingdom (Mk 12:34; Lk 17:20,21; Jn 18:36,37) and the many references to its present existence (Acts 2:30-33; Col 1:13) seem to make no impression. And the “child of God” figure is extended to teach a right of fellowship for the unborn “child,” or that once one is a “child” he forever remains in God’s family. Because a **literal** child so remains, or a **literal** king has a gold throne, many do not hesitate to assert these things of the **figures**. Did King Herod have a bushy tail?

The same illustrative material may be used in more than one figure and with different meanings. We **become** a child of God by “birth” (or adoption) but the “child” figure may also be used to emphasize the necessity for displaying characteristics of our heavenly Father, Jn 8:38-47; Mt 5:43-45. In

every case, the author determines the use of his figures, and we must be content to make only the application authorized by context.

The people of God are those who hear, believe, and obey the call of the gospel of Christ, 2 Thess 2:14; Acts 2:37-41. Generally speaking, we are either in **darkness** (in sin, unacceptable unto God), or we are in the **light** (in truth, acceptable). Those who are acceptable unto God are described or designated by a multitude of figures, each emphasizing some particular characteristic of the saints. God’s people are LIKE workers in His vineyard, LIKE soldiers in His army, LIKE sheep in His flock. These are not **different** relationships—they are applied to the same people. When one becomes a branch upon Christ, the vine, he also becomes a lively stone, built upon Christ, the foundation, 1 Pet 2:5. He enters one acceptable relationship, variously described by these figures.

Each figure has its own language or terminology. One is built upon the foundation, when God’s people are LIKENED unto a building; but he is born, when God’s people are LIKENED unto a family. It would be a mixing of figures to say one was born into a vine, or enlisted in a flock, or built into a family. If “born of God” is a mystical, “better-felt-than-told” process, then so is that of becoming a worker in the Lord’s vineyard, or a runner in the Christian race.

In each of these figures Christ is put in the prominent position. He is

King in the kingdom, Shepherd of the flock, elder brother in the family, and head of the body. His position is not simply an honorary one, but its importance is established by its function. As head of the body He directs its activities; as King, He rules all who will be subject to Him, who therefore make up His kingdom. He is the vine that gives life to each branch, and without whom there can be no fruit. He protects the sheep, and directs and pays the laborers. Christ is the foundation upon which each building block depends.

It is also important to note that in every figure the unit is an **individual**. “If a man abide not... he is cast forth as a branch.” Members of the body are saints, not congregations. The family of God is a “brotherhood” not a “churchhood.” His kingdom is made up of citizens, not of “communities” (as Campbell thought). This is a vital point. It establishes the **direct relationship** of saints to Christ. Our

primary obligation is to be faithful to Christ, not to the church. The true church is not the object of our faith, but the **result** of faithfulness to Christ. It is the duty of each saint to maintain that faithfulness, and a faithful church will be the result of such fidelity.

Most figures have a central theme, and are given to teach a single point. When God’s people are likened unto a kingdom, RULE is the theme—God rules, through Christ, in the hearts of His people. But we may be told, “The kingdom is like...” a treasure—in value; or leaven—the way it is spread; or mustard seed—which from a small start produces big things. We should never make more of the figure than is obvious in its context.

Finally, no figure teaches a permanent relation. Our position in each is subject to our remaining faithful.

—via *Plain Talk*, December 1976 

## Remember in Prayer

Our sister, **Joyce**, passed from this life Friday, 3/29. Visitation is planned for noon Monday, at Limestone Chapel; the funeral at 2 pm. The burial will be at Ford’s Chapel Cemetery in Harvest.

**Mike B** had some fluid removed from around his heart and liver, and I understand will be having another procedure on his liver, shortly—they have traditionally been very painful.

**Pam** has been feeling poorly, and was diagnosed with COVID on Friday, as well.

**John, Sylvia and Paige Pollard** plan to move to Sugarland, TX, on May 1 to work with the brethren there, and so that Paige will have care through Texas Children’s Hospital.

Please continue to pray for **Carolyn; Betty; and Kathy Mitchell.** 