

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CHURCH

The church of Christ is unique in that there is only one church, sometimes called the body of Christ.

Eph. 4:4-6: "There is one body, (church; chap. 1:22-23) and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

From this word may we conclude that the division of so-called Christendom into sects and denominations is a denial of that word?

The word translated 'church' in the New Testament never refers to a building of lime and stone, or to anything inanimate; but in figure to 'living stones' as the context in which it is used clearly shows, to cite a few:

Matt. 18:17: "... tell it to the church. ..."

Acts 2:47: "... the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Acts 5:11: "And great fear came upon all the church."

Rom. 16:5: "Likewise greet the church that is in their house ..."

Eph. 5:25: "... even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"

1 Peter 2:5: "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house ..."

The above signifies that the CHURCH OF CHRIST is composed of people (living stones), a people drawn out from the world, who have accepted Christ and become obedient to Him as their Saviour.

The institution of the CHURCH foretold by CHRIST.

This is related for us in the Gospel by Matthew chap. 16 when, we are told, Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, and the following conversation took place between Jesus and his disciples:

v.13: Jesus: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

v.14: Disciples: "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

v.15: Jesus: "But whom say ye that I am?"

v.16: Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

v.18: Jesus: "... Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

We gather from this that the CHURCH would be built on the rock which is CHRIST, and not on Peter as some erroneously teach, but the Messiahship of Christ — the great and eternal truth that JESUS IS THE CHRIST THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD — this great truth which Jesus said was revealed to Peter by God:

v.17: "... for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

Notice in this portion of scripture (Matthew 16) that Christ says, **I will build my church**, speaking in the future tense, signifying that the church was not yet in existence — was not an Old Testament institution — the building of it was still future from that time. Therefore we must continue our search, we must read on if we

would discover when this church that Christ said he would build, actually began to be built.

The Beginning of the Church of Christ

Regarding the beginning of this church the following questions may be asked:

1. Where did this church begin to be built?
2. When did this church begin to be built?
3. How did this church begin to be built?

The answer to all these questions will be found by carefully reading the book called 'The Acts of the Apostles' (at chapter 2). Here we discover that:

1. The place was Jerusalem.
2. The time was the first Pentecost after the resurrection and ascension of Christ.
3. People heard the gospel, believed the gospel, repented and were baptized for the remission of sins, and continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. (See Acts 2:37-42)

Verse 47 of that same chapter tells us that "THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH DAILY SUCH AS SHOULD BE SAVED" or as the Revised version puts it "SUCH AS WERE BEING SAVED."

The saved ones were added to the church by the Lord, and so the building of HIS CHURCH was started.

The Meeting Place of the Church

The popular desire today is for grand buildings of magnificent architecture, with stained-glass windows, crosses, altars, and great organs to lead the praise. We do not find such places mentioned in the New Testament, and so they would appear to be man-made additions; but we do read in 1 Cor. 16:19: "The churches of Asia salute you, Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house."

So the meeting place of the church may be in a humble home, a hall or other suitable buildings, or even in the open air; in fact, wherever the church gathers to worship God, this is the meeting place of the church.

The Name of the Church

We do not find in the word of God such names as 'Church of Scotland'; Roman Catholic Church'; Lutheran Church'; 'Wesleyan Church'; or any other man-made name; these came into existence in post-New Testament days; but we do read in God's words: Acts 20:28: where the Apostle Paul says to the elders from the church at Ephesus: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Also in

Rom.16:16: "... the churches of Christ salute you." "CHURCH OF CHRIST" — "CHURCH OF GOD" — It has pleased God to reveal these names by his Spirit-inspired word. Let us call Bible things by Bible names.

The Head of the Church

We may ask the question, is it a Pope, Bishop, Archbishop or such like? Let us to the word of God again.

Eph.1:22: "And (God) hath put all things under his (Christ's) feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

Eph.5:23: "For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church..."

Under Christ as head there is no room for the un-scriptural terms of 'clergy' and 'laity.' In His church all are ministers, servants, workers. No doubt the reader is aware that there is only one place in the Bible where the word 'reverend' is used, and there it is applied to God. (See Psalms 111:9).