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"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

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CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (3)

"How Do I Recognize This Church?"

In last month's article, we showed, scripturally, that there is only one church. Jesus being the head of this church (Ephesians 1:22, 23) and Savior of this church (Ephesians 5:23), it would behoove us to locate this church and become a member of it. Thus, we come to our question, "How do I recognize this church?"

By turning to the Bible, we can learn many things concerning the identity of the Lord's church. Let us keep in mind that we must locate the church that fits the description of the church in the Bible. What is that for which we are to look? Let us consider these things:

(1) The Lord's church was established on the Day of Pentecost about 33 A.D. (Acts 2). The denominations were started much too late to be the Lord's church. For example: Baptist - 1611; Methodist - 1739; Lutheran - 1530; Episcopal - 1609.

(2) The Lord's church was founded by Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 16:18). The denominations trace their roots back to men - John Wesley, John Calvin, Martin Luther, etc.

(3) The Lord's church uses no creeds, manuals, or catechisms. It looks to God's Word as supreme authority (Romans 1:16; Col. 3:17; I Thess. 2:13). Many denominations use a manual, a discipline, a book of prayer, etc.

(4) The Lord's church teaches correctly concerning salvation: Hear (Romans 10:17); Believe (Mark 16:16); Repent (Acts 2:38); Confess (Romans 10:10); Baptism (Romans 6:3, 4; I Peter 3:21). It is interesting to note that while the Bible places much emphasis on baptism, and always places salvation **after** it, most denominations believe in salvation **before** baptism.

(5) The Lord's church is scripturally organized. It has elders and deacons (Phil. 1:1). No one man rules the church. Each congregation is autonomous. While many denominations believe in one man over many congregations in an area or a council over all, God clearly teaches that each congregation should have elders who rule over it (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

(6) The Lord's church uses no mechanical instruments of music in its worship. The New Testament teaches us to "make melody" with our hearts, not "Harps" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

(7) The Lord's church partakes of the Lord's Supper on every first day of the week (Acts 20:7). God says take it every week; man says every month, every quarter, on special occasions, and so forth. Who are we to believe?

(8) The Lord's church wears a name that is scriptural and that gives glory and honor to Christ. Although the church is identified by several names in the Bible, it seems that one name was adopted, probably because it showed proper ownership - THE CHURCH OF CHRIST (Romans 16:16).

In your search for the church that Jesus established, please give prayerful consideration to these things. To be Jesus' church, it must originate from Him, and do the things that He commands it to do.

- Charles Coats

THE PREACHING OF JESUS

Charles Coats

In our world today (and sadly, among our brethren), we hear so many talking about "preaching Jesus." The proclamation goes forth, "We preach Jesus Christ and him crucified." This of course, is a noble endeavor, and, if fulfilled, would do much good. However, I am hearing strange sounds coming from those who claim to "preach Jesus." The gist of their message is, "God loves you; Jesus loves you; I love you; trust him; and, continue in sin." One needs only to examine closely the teachings and actions of these men to see the truth of this statement.

What bothers me more than these people teaching such is the number of people believing such **AND** wanting such. Truly, Paul was right when he said people would gather to themselves ear-tickling preachers (2 Timothy 4:2-4). Brethren, we need to realize that these so-called "preachers of Jesus" are **NOT** preaching Jesus but are perverting the gospel of Christ!

When one examines scripture, he notices a different emphasis involved in "preaching Jesus." Let us examine the Scriptures to see what God called the "preaching of Jesus?"

In Ephesians 3 and 4, we get some valuable information on this subject. Paul alludes twice to "preaching Jesus" (Eph. 3:8; 4:20, 21). What did Paul include in this? Notice the following:

(1) Eternal nature and purpose of the church - 3:10, 11

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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EDITOR Charles Coats
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THE PREACHING OF JESUS

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(2) Love - 3:14 - 19

(3) Walk worthily of your calling - 4:1

(4) ONE CHURCH, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, God - 4:4-6

(5) Speak the truth in love - 4:15

(6) Don't walk in the ways of the world - 4:17-24

(7) No lying, no stealing, purity of speech; Christian living - 4:25-32

When Paul "preached Jesus" to the Ephesians, he preached more than "love". He preached the forsaking of the world and the continual living after the example of Christ. He told them there were some things they could not do anymore.

The sugar-stick passage of many on this subject is I Corinthians 2:2. Paul told the Corinthians that when he was among them, he had preached Jesus and Him crucified. In Acts 18:1-17, we find Paul's previous visit to Corinth. While preaching that "Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18:5), Paul was accused of blasphemy and told them, "Your blood be upon your own hands" (Acts 18:6) (You mean Paul told them they were lost?!). He also taught a distinctive doctrine that included baptism (Acts 18:8), and equated the "preaching of Jesus" to "teaching the word of God" (I Cor. 2:2 + Acts 18:11). Paul's preaching was not the mild, soft-soaped, watered-

down, story-telling preaching of many today. It convicted people of wrong and caused them to look inward in search of their own lives. Some became mad and had Paul arrested (Acts 18:12). Yes, Paul "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified," but we can see that what Paul did was a far cry from what men do today who claim to preach the same message.

Paul, again, gives us a better understanding of "preaching Jesus" in Col. 1:27, 28. Here, Paul tells us that he **WARNED** them and taught them. Anyone who would dare to warn today is called a 'legalist' or some such demeaning term. Yet, to warn is what Paul and God tell us we are to do if we are truly going to "preach Jesus."

The cry goes forth today to "preach Jesus" and leave people alone. They want us to tell people that we love them and not to judge them. Yet, if one is to do what God said, and he wants to truly "preach Jesus", then let him do as Paul told Timothy, "PREACH THE WORD". . . **REPROVE, REBUKE, AND EXHORT**" (2 Tim. 4:2).

God, give us men who will unashamedly and without fear preach the Word of God in its entirety. **AND**, give us Christians who will accept nothing else.

Dead To The Law By the Body of Christ

ROMANS 7:4

Dean Fugett

When Jesus died, the authority of the Law of Moses was removed. He fulfilled the law and its purpose. (Romans 8:2-4.) The Law of Moses with all its ordinances was fulfilled and nailed to the cross of Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:7-14; Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:14-18.)

We are no longer under the commandments written in stone. We are no longer serving the letter

which killeth. We serve under the grace of God. We are now under the law of liberty (James 1:25), the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2), the law of the Faith. We are indeed under law, but a law of Grace and Truth, a **perfect law** with the power to make those who come to it perfect. We are under the law of Christ to **KEEP** his commandment out of love. (John 14:15; Luke 6:46.) John says that to say that we know God and not keep His commandments is to lie. (I John 2:4.)

Paul points out that all now who try to keep parts of the Law (incense burning, animal sacrifices, circumcision, sabbath keeping, instrumental music in worship, the Ten Commandment Law), are actually fallen from grace and make Jesus' death of no effect. (Galatians 5:1-4.) Peter said that these laws were a yoke "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." (Acts 15:10.) The seriousness of treading under foot the blood of Christ is told in Hebrews 10:29-31.

By Jesus' death, the Jew was freed from the Law. Then both Jew and Gentile were reconciled to God in the one body by the blood of Christ. Why then serve the Law? (Galatians 3:19.)

P. O. Box 75
Cave City, AR 72521

MISSOURI - KANSAS LECTURES

Charles Coats

The Fourth Annual Missouri-Kansas Lectures were held September 21 - 25, in Independence, Missouri at the building of the 39th Street Church of Christ. The theme of these lectures was "What Do You Know About God?" There were 40 lectures and 26 speakers, including 4 special classes for ladies. These lectures can be obtained in book form or on tape (video or audio). For more information, contact Jack Williams, 16015 E. 40th, Independence, MO 64055. I highly recommend these for your library.

'CHIEF ELDER'

Bill Graddy

My definition of a "chief elder" is: one of the elders desiring to be the boss of the other elders, a presiding elder, one who always wants to speak for the eldership, and or, he likes to run the church by himself. Of course an elder who attempts to do this is displeasing to God! He is a novice in the faith (1 Timothy 3:6). He is not mature enough to realize the importance of the qualifications or else he is in rebellion to them by his neophyte (childish) ways.

It is the strangest of behavior that men, like a group of elders, will let one man rule them. In an eldership of eight, one man will hire and fire the preacher. It seems, in many cases, that one man (sometimes not an elder) will run the church and the others will let him. Both groups fall in the same novice class. This makes for a bad situation. Elders should "prefer one another" (Romans 12:10), and never think of themselves "more highly" than they should (Romans 12:3). This one passage would cure the "chief elder" disposition.

It was the "chief elder" attitude that gave birth to the Roman Catholic Church and caused the church of our Lord to hide in the wilderness for 1260 years. Who will pay for this setback of the cause of Christ? In congregations today, perhaps this is the cause of most problems. Elders must present a united front! This must not be hypocritical, but real unity! The sheep will follow shepherds that are one in Christ most every time.

The Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:4), will give the under shepherds a "crown of glory" if they remain true to their calling and not attempt to play the role of a "chief elder."

22 Sugar Creek
North Little Rock, AR 72116

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Some people speak from experience, others from experience don't speak.

BAPTISM

Charles Coats

Much has been said concerning the subject of baptism. There are many false teachers who are teaching that it is not necessary for a person to be baptized in order to be saved. This "logic" is based on man's reasoning, not God's. They argue that baptism is a work, and you cannot work your way to heaven. They have failed to understand that God expects those who are His people to work (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8). They have also missed the point that God will judge us by these works (Matthew 7:21; Romans 2:6; Revelation 20:12). Yes, baptism is a "work", but it is a work that one must do if he is to go to heaven.

To further illustrate the necessity of baptism, let me ask a series of questions: (1) Will one be saved before his sins are washed away?; (2) Will one be saved outside of Christ?; (3) Will one be saved who does not obtain a new life ("born again")? The obvious answer to all of these questions is, NO! This being the case, then how does one have his sins washed away, get into Christ, and obtain a new life? The Bible clearly gives us the answer -BAPTISM! Please note the following:

- A. Acts 22:16 - Baptism washes away sin.
- B. 1 Peter 3:21 - Baptism saves.
- C. Galatians 3:27 - Baptism places one in Christ wherein are all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3).
- D. Romans 6:3, 4 - Baptism gives us a new life, thus one is "born again" (Note also verse 11).
- E. 1 Corinthians 12:13 - Baptism places one in the church. The saved are in the church (Ephesians 5:23).

Yes, faith is necessary (Hebrews 11:6). Yes, repentance is necessary (Acts 2:38). Yes, confession is necessary (Romans 10:9, 10). However, coupled with these must be baptism (Note: Acts 2:41; 8:36-38; 10:47). Those who have not been baptized in order to have their sins washed away will be lost.

I WEPT ALSO!

Bill Graddy

God forbid that I should compare myself with Christ as he wept over Jerusalem for I am not worthy. Yet, my insides ached and burned as I listened to an elder explaining the position of the church relative to why a group broke away from them. The evasion, the contradictions and the failure to state the facts and stand for the truth brought tears. I sat there in utter amazement not only to his pitiful attempt, but the obvious acceptance by many of whom were elders and preachers. Instead of the group trying to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27), it seemed that they were congratulating each other on the rebellion and tearing asunder of the body of Christ.

As we look over Pulaski County (where Bill lives. Editor) we have one of the largest congregations in an unnecessary lawsuit, (1 Corinthians 6:1-8), between the elders and some of the members; another large group testifying and receiving denominational members; and disruptive and rebellious members of three churches have started another congregation. The restlessness, the uncertain sounds, and the behavior resulting from such Christianity (?) make it easy to understand why the situation exists. The destitution of truth will tell on us! (1 Timothy 6:5; Jude 10, 16, 19). Of course, these attitudes toward the Scriptures did not crop up overnight. They have been years in the making. Thus, elders, especially, will answer to God at the Judgment Day for their failures in teaching and seeing that the truth was taught, and in administering the proper discipline as needed. Their inability to know how to correct these things is an evident token of their vision (Proverbs 29:18). Yes, it is a two way street, (Hebrews 13:7, 17), as the members who are in rebellion will also pay the price. The shame and disgrace brought on the Lord's church does not go unnoticed and

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I WEPT ALSO!

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will take years to live down the bad publicity (Ephesians 5:27).

Brethren, what did Paul mean when he stated, "Prove things honest in the sight of all men?" (Romans 12:17). He meant, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so..." (Psalms 107:2). WHY? "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalms 11:3). The obvious attempt to cover up, pacify, pamper, evade and pervert the truth is the enemy among us. The liberals shout "radical", "do not be negative", "we have a new breed of Christians", we can all have "unity under one umbrella" and such unity of diversity seems to be the order of the day. Having been there I sympathize with those who are struggling and standing for the truth. One suggestion, let the brethren know (1 Peter 2:17), and we will help you "... mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). We cannot predict what men will do, but once they say or do something then we can "measure them" and "mark" them (Romans 16:17; Revelation 11:1).

I am no prophet but if the present situation continues, the faithful will be meeting in their living rooms at home in ten short years!

22 Sugar Creek
North Little Rock, AR 72116

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A gossip is a person with a strong sense of rumor.

* * * * *

A man rocked a boat to see if it would tip. IT DID. A man looked into a gun to see if it was loaded. IT WAS. A young girl kept late hours to see if it really would injure her office work. IT DID. A young man tried drinking until he was drunk to see if it would make him behave like a fool. IT DID. A man said, "I'll ignore Jesus Christ and see if I go to Hell." HE DID.

* * * * *

A loose tongue often gets its owner into a tight place.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

Mail all address changes to:
CHURCH OF CHRIST
P. O. BOX 251
MAMMOTH SPRING, AR 72554