

The Old Paths

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“The Church For Which Christ Died”

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There is much confusion on the subject of the church. Some say, “Join the church of your choice.” Others would have you believe that the church is of no consequence at all. What does the Bible say about this subject?

The Bible says that Christ promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18). Based upon Peter’s confession in Christ as the Son of God, Jesus said, “*I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” Not until Acts 2 do we read of this church being in existence. There, we find that the Lord added the saved to the church. He was adding those who had followed His plan to “*repent and be baptized ... for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38, 41, 47). After Acts 2, the church is always spoken of as being in existence. In considering the New Testament passages on the church, we find that the Lord’s church:

Wears His Name

Paul said, “*the churches of Christ greet you*” (Rom. 16:16). This is not a proper name, but a description of the people. They are a congregation (called out group) of people belonging to Christ. The Lord’s church does not wear the name of any man. “Church of God” is used in the Bible, but that only makes sense, for is not Jesus also God (deity)?

Sometimes we find the word “church” alone used in the Bible. This is logical for there were no other “churches” in the first century. When someone talked about “the church” in the first century, it was understood of whom they were speaking. Again, for all of this, it was not a proper name, but a description of the people.

Follows His Revealed Word

Many today teach that Christ is still revealing His will to people. This is simply not true. Jude said that God’s word has been “*once for all delivered to the saints*” (Jude 3). Paul said the gospel had been preached to all the world in his day (Col. 1:5-6, 23). The Lord’s church follows Christ’s revealed word, not “modern” revelation that, many times, contradicts the plain statements of the Bible.

The Lord’s church does not follow the statements and rulings of councils, synods, conventions, etc. Denominations have conventions to decide what they will believe and teach. They then change their creeds in accordance with the rulings of the leadership. If a more liberal leadership is in place, the teachings will be more liberal; if they have a more conservative leadership in place, their teachings will be more conservative. Friends, where do we find such things taking place in the Bible? The Lord’s church, the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16), does not follow councils, synods, and the like, but asks,

“*what saith the Scripture?*” (Rom. 4:3). The church for which Christ died speaks as the Bible, and says, “*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*” (I Pet. 4:11).

Worships God In Spirit And In Truth

Jesus made it clear that “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*” (Jn. 4:24). Notice, that Jesus says it is a MUST for people to worship God “*in spirit and in truth.*” If something is a “must”, it means we have no choice but to do it. What does this mean to worship God “*in spirit and in truth?*”

Based on John 4:24, we see that worship to God involves three essential things: 1) The right object (God). 2) The right spirit (Attitude). 3) The right act (The truth). Whether or not God accepts or rejects our worship depends upon whether or not we worship Him “*in spirit*” and “*in truth*”! As Jesus spoke these words to the Samaritan, He was saying that true worshippers need to be focused on spiritual matters, not physical (Rom. 14:17). That is why we do not have pie suppers, bingo, etc.!!

The second part has to do with “*truth.*” In order for our worship to be acceptable to God, we must worship in connection with what the Bible says (Jn. 17:17; I Pet. 4:11), doing all things by Christ’s authority (Col. 3:17).

Is A Spiritual Institution

Some have the mistaken notion that the Lord’s church is to solve all of the social ills of this world. The church for which Christ died is not a political institution, nor is it an entity for stopping crime, or supporting various communi-

ty groups such as the Boy/Girl Scouts, "Meals On Wheels," Nursery Schools, Ball Teams, etc. The Lord's church is a spiritual institution. This is why we worship God "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). The Lord's people offer up "spiritual sacrifices" to God (I Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15). Paul said, "the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). The Lord's church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). She is called the bride of Christ (Rev. 22:17), and the body of Christ (Eph. 4:4). Those who belong to the Lord's family are more concerned about spiritual matters than physical pursuits (Matt. 6:19-21, 33).

Friends, the church for which Christ died is not an earthly entity. She is unlike anything this world has seen. Let us respect the Lord's church and be a member while we still have time.

"Points With A Punch!"

- ◆ Never put a question mark where God has put a period.
- ◆ If you are too busy to assemble with the Lord's people, you are overworked.
- ◆ Some say a little talk with Jesus makes it right, but Paul had a little talk and had to "arise and be baptized" (Acts 22:16).
- ◆ People who are spiritually blind rely on feeling for Heaven.
- ◆ A hundred people will search the woods for a lost boy but won't move an inch to save a soul.
- ◆ Some folks have more of their "thinks-so's" than the Lord's "say-so's" in their religion.

Where Is Your Influence?

Robert Turner (Plain Talk, May 1967)

A short time back brother Ferrell Jenkins visited with an aged disciple, brother Henry S. Ficklin, who studied at the feet of J.W. McGarvey years ago. We let brother Jenkins tell the story:

"In the 19th century when the church was divided over the use of instrumental music and the missionary society, McGarvey took what might be described as a "middle-of-the-road" position. He opposed the use of the instrument but favored the society. Even though he opposed the organ in worship and moved his membership when the Broadway church, Lexington, Ky., adopted the organ by majority vote, he continued to fraternize with those who used it. What about his students whom he taught that the instrument in worship was wrong? Did they follow his scriptural advice? No! Brother Ficklin commented that McGarvey's influence went with his fellowship and not with his teaching."

In 1950 brother J.P. Sewell, in

a Harding College lecture, recalled the following advice, given to him by brother McGarvey away back in 1902. It is advice preachers today might ponder:

"You are on the right road, and whatever you do, don't let anybody persuade you that you can successfully combat error by fellowshipping it and going along with it. I have tried it. I believed at the start that was the only way to do it. I've never held membership in a congregation that uses instrumental music. I have, however, accepted invitations to preach without distinction between churches that used it and churches that didn't. I've gone along with their papers and magazines and things of that sort. During all these years I have taught the truth as the New Testament teaches it to every young preacher who has passes through the College of the Bible. Yet, I do not know of more than six of those men who are preaching the truth today. It won't work."

Our influence goes with what we do rather than with what we say. Ponder this well, you preachers, elders, and members who give your presence, support, and silent acquiescence to practices you know to be without divine authority. You hope to teach them? Do you know more about teaching than J.W. McGarvey and the Lord?? (Matt. 12:30)

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