

Did Alexander Campbell Start The Church of Christ?

By: Keith Welch

For several generations uninformed individuals have frequently tied the origin of the church of Christ to Alexander Campbell. Members of the church of Christ have often been referred to as "Campbellites." In this short article we'll explore the origin of the church of Christ, when, where and by who was the church of Christ established.

Identifying Alexander Campbell

Alexander Campbell was born on September 12, 1788 in Northern Ireland. According to historical records, Alexander Campbell came to the United States in 1809 at the age of 21. He was accompanied by His mother and siblings. His father Thomas Alexander had emigrated to the United States many months earlier in 1807. Alexander Campbell was "ordained" by his father in Washington County, Pennsylvania. Alexander Campbell was one of several men identified with the Restoration Movement. This early 19th Century period had men questioning the beliefs and practices of denominational churches and sought to return to the pattern found in the Biblical text. While not perfect by any means, one ought to appreciate the desire to pattern our lives, service and worship after God's holy word!

About 15 years before the death of His first wife, Margaret, Alexander built a home near Bethany, Virginia (now West Virginia). A more in-depth research of Alexander's life would reveal many endeavors, religiously, politically, secularly and educationally. In 1840, Alexander Campbell founded Bethany College in Bethany Virginia, (again now West Virginia). Alexander Campbell died on March 4 1866 at Bethany, West Virginia.

Identifying The Churches Builder

Many uninformed and or mis-informed individuals often attribute the origin or beginning of the Lord's church to Alexander Campbell! However, a simple observation of the Bible reveals that to be false! Alexander Campbell was born in 1788 and the Lord's Church had its beginning around 30A.D. Jesus, during His earthly ministry promised saying, "...on this rock I will build My church..." (Matt. 16:18). Jesus promised to build His church! Jesus informed those present with Him in the first century saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." (Matt. 16:28). The Lord's church or kingdom would come in the lifetime of those living in the first century! Alexander Campbell lived during the 18th and 19th centuries! Over 1,700 years span the time between the beginning of the Lord's church and the birth of Alexander Campbell.

The Lord's Church had its beginning in Jerusalem, on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. A reading of 2:47 reveals, "...the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." Isaiah 2:1-2 foretold the beginning of the Lord's church from Jerusalem and in the latter days! The events of Acts 2 are at Jerusalem and in the latter days!

Identifying Evidential Facts

It's abundantly clear from the Bible record and the factual information from the life of Alexander Campbell that Jesus the Christ founded the Church of Christ and not Alexander Campbell. There are other evidential facts that show or prove that it was impossible for Alexander Campbell to be the originator of the Church of Christ. The picture below is a sign that commemorates a local church of Christ in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. It's clear that members of the church of Christ were meeting at this location, on American soil, in 1710, at least some 78 years before Alexander Campbell was born! The minister named on the marker was Thomas Cheever and he was born in 1658 and died in 1749. The church promised and built by Jesus predates Campbell and Cheever, just read your New Testament Bible! Jesus built His church and it was Paul who wrote in the first century, "...The churches of Christ greet you." (Rom. 16:16).

