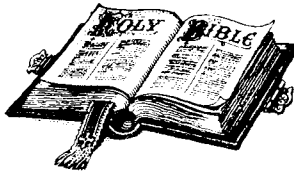


THE INSTRUCTOR



"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16

Volume 16

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Number 5

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

There is a definite need for this study because much ignorance prevails concerning this question. Many do not understand **what the church is.**

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT:

1. A DENOMINATION. In fact there is **no authority** in the New Testament of Jesus Christ for **any** denomination to exist. The Psalmist said: **"Except the Lord built the house, they labor in vain that build it."** (Psalms 127:1). Jesus Christ said: **"Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."** (Matt. 15:13).

2. A COMBINATION OF DENOMINATIONS. Religious divisions are characteristic of denominations. Jesus said: **"...Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation..."** (Matt. 12:25). The church is **not** made up of different religious groups that teach doctrines contrary to each other and contrary to Christ.

3. A PART OF ANY DENOMINATION. Denominations are formed by human authority, but the church was designed by divine wisdom and built by divine authority. (See Eph. 3:10-11; Matt. 16:18) One can not be a member of any denomination unless he does more or less

than or something other than what is taught in the New Testament. However, we learn from Paul's statements in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that we are furnished completely unto every good work by the Scriptures!

4. A SECRET ORDER OR ORGANIZATION SUCH AS FREEMASONRY. Jesus Christ **"spake openly to the world"** and **"in secret"** he said nothing. (See John 18:20). The **"traditions"** of men make the word of God **"of none effect."** (See Mark 7:1-13). Error is advocated by such secret orders as Freemasonry.

5. AN EARTHLY KINGDOM. The church of Jesus Christ is the kingdom of God. The Colossians had been delivered from the power of darkness and had been **"translated into the kingdom of His dear Son."** (See Col. 1:13-14). Jesus said: **"My kingdom is not of this world..."** (John 18:36).

6. A MEETING HOUSE. There is a difference between a meeting house and the house of God, which is the church. Brick and mortar do **not** constitute the church, but the church may assemble in a house made of brick and mortar. Christians make up the church. Peter said: **"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house..."** (1 Peter 2:5).

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THE INSTRUCTOR

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CARROL R. SUTTON
EDITOR

Send all questions, comments, and criticisms to the editor, 1107 Highway 431 South, Albertville, Alabama 35950.

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Editorial . . .

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

The word "Christian" appears in the Scriptures only three times. In Acts 11:26 we read that "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Luke tells us that "Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28). Peter says: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4:16). In each of the above instances, the word "Christian" is applied to individuals who are disciples of Jesus Christ.

There is much error taught concerning who is a Christian. Let us now consider the question: "Who is a Christian?"

1. NOT OLD TESTAMENT CHARACTERS. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Daniel Isaac, Joseph and David were good men. In fact, they were godly men. They were saints, but they were not Christians. They lived and died before the age in which men can be Christians. The word "Christian" is never applied to any person in the Old Testament Scriptures.

2. NOT ALL GOOD MORAL PEOPLE. Morality is certainly an obligation of a Christian, but morality alone does not make one a Christian. Before Cornelius became a

Christian he was "a devout man" who gave "much alms to the people". (See Acts 10:1-2).

3. NOT ALL SINCERE PEOPLE. Sincerity is very desirable and is essential to a person being a Christian. However, a person may be sincere, having a good conscience, and still not be a Christian. While persecuting Christians, Saul of Tarsus was sincere. In addressing the council in Acts 23:1 he said: "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." In Acts 26:9-11 he said: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." Although Saul was apparently sincere and had a good conscience at the time described above, he was not a Christian! You may be very sincere and have a "good conscience" and still not be a Christian.

4. NOT ALL RELIGIOUS PEOPLE. The prophets of Baal, (see 1 Kings 18), the Athenians of Acts 17:22-23 and the Ephesians who worshipped "the great goddess Diana" of Acts 19:23-41 were religious, but they were not Christians. The Sadducees constituted a sect of the Jews who denied the existence of angels and denied the resurrection of the dead. Although they were religious, they were not Christians. Neither were the Pharisees Christians. Paul was a Pharisee before he became a Christian. One certainly can not be a Christian without being religious, but the mere fact that one is religious does not mean that he is a Christian. Denominationalists are religious, but they are not Christians!

5. A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO OBEYS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. The gospel of Christ is the power of God to save men. In order for a person to be saved and thus become a Christian, he must hear the gospel, believe it with all of his heart, repent of sins, confess the Lord Jesus with his mouth, and be baptized "into Christ." (See Romans 10:13-17; Romans 1:16; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 10:9-10;

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HOSPITALITY

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Hospitality is a very desirable trait. As far as many people are concerned, it is lacking, but Christians should be concerned about making it a part of their lives.

Let us consider some facts about hospitality:

1. Hospitality was taught in the Old Testament Scriptures. God through Moses said to Israel: "And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." (Lev. 19:33-34).

2. Hospitality was practiced in Old Testament times. Consider Abraham as recorded in Genesis 18 and also in Genesis 19; Bethuel in Genesis 24; Laban in Genesis 29, and the widow in 1 Kings 17.

3. Hospitality was (and is) taught in the New Testament of Jesus Christ. Please consider the following passages:

A. Romans 12:13 says: "Distributing to the necessity of saints: given to hospitality."

B. Titus 1:8 says: "But a lover of hospitality . . ." and 1 Timothy 3:2 says ". . . given to hospitality." In these passages the apostle Paul lists this as one of the qualifications that a man must meet in order to be a "bishop" or "elder."

C. Hebrews 13:1-2 says: "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

D. In I Peter 4:9 the apostle Peter says: "Use hospitality one to another without grudging."

4. Hospitality was also practiced in New Testament times. Consider Lazarus, Mary and Martha toward Jesus in John 12:1-9; the Philippian jailor toward Paul and Silas in Acts 16:34-36; Lydia toward Paul and his companions in Acts 16:14-16 and 16:40; Philip toward Paul and his companions in Acts 21:8-10; Mnason, and old disciple, toward Paul and his companions in Acts 21:15-16 and Gaius toward others in 3 John 1-8.

Are you given to hospitality? One of the things for which you will be judged in the last day for will be whether or not you have helped others. How will you stand?

(CRS)

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

Gal. 3:26-27). When one does this, he is washed in the blood of Christ and thus saved by the grace of God and added to the church. (See Acts 2:41, 47).

6. A CHRISTIAN IS A NEW CREATURE. When one believes the gospel, repents of sins and is baptized "into Christ," he is born again and thus becomes a new creature. Paul said: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17). (See also John 3:1-5 & Romans 6:3-4). If you are not a new creature, you are not really a Christian.

7. A CHRISTIAN IS A MEMBER OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, WHICH IS THE CHURCH, A CITIZEN IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND A BRANCH IN CHRIST THE VINE. We learn from Col. 1:18 that "the body" is "the church." Paul tells us in Rom. 12:5 that "we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." In 1 Cor. 12:20 Paul says: "But now are they many members, yet but one body." We learn from Col. 1:13-13 that Christians have been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and from John 15:1-6 that disciples are in Christ who is the vine.

8. A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO BELONGS TO CHRIST. Paul says: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die: we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's! (Rom. 14:8). In 1 Cor. 6:19-20 Paul says: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (Also see Gal. 3:26-29). If you do not belong to Christ, it is quite certain that you are not a Christian!

Are you really a Christian? Why aren't you?

(CRS)

PROVERBS 23:20-21 says: "Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?"

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WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS:

1. A SPIRITUAL HOUSE. Paul calls "the house of God" "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15). In writing to the "elect" who had purified their souls "in obeying the truth," Peter said: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, . . ."

2. THE BODY OF CHRIST. Paul tells us in Eph. 1:22-23 that Christ is "the head over all things to the church, which is his body . . ." In Col. 1:18 he says: "And he is the head of the body, the church . . ." Col. 1:24 also mentions the body, "which is the church."

3. THE KINGDOM. The words **church** and **kingdom** are used interchangeably in Matthew 16:18-19. Jesus indicated that the Lord's Super would be observed in the kingdom (Matt. 26:26-29), and Paul shows that is was observed in the church. (See 1 Cor. 11). Therefore they must be the same! Obedience to the gospel of Christ causes one to become a citizen of the kingdom and a member of the Lord's church. (See 1 Cor. 12:13; John 3:3-5; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:47).

(Continued in right column)

4. THE "CALLED OUT." Scholars tell us that the word translated "church" suggest this fact. In writing to the "elect" Peter said: ". . . who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light . . ." (See 1 Peter 2:9-10). **Unless you have been called out of the world, you are not in the Lord's church!**

5. THE SAVED. Acts 2:47 says, ". . . And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Since all of the saved are added to the church by the Lord, there are no saved ones out side of the church. Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16).

The church is composed of penitent believers who have been baptized "for the remission of sins" upon a confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

If you are not in the church of Jesus Christ, you will not be among the saved in the day of judgement!

(CRS)

THE SUTTON-HILL DEBATE still had not been re-scheduled due to the unwillingness of Hill and the West Hobbs "elders."

Sentence Sermons

The human mind is a strange thing. Pat some men on the back and it makes their head swell.

True happiness is a condition of the mind, and not an accumulation of cash.

The true meaning of loving God is to love him without measure.

Sin may afford some pleasure, but it doesn't afford it very long.

He who is good at making excuses is seldom good for anything else.

"He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbor cometh and searcheth him." (Proverbs 18:17).

CHURCH OF CHRIST
1107 Highway 431 South
Albertville, AL 35950