

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

February 20, 2022

Identification Marks

By Everett Hardin

There are certain identification marks which you have that no one else has; even if you have an identical twin, you would have different finger prints and would be identified by them. When a suspect is wanted by the law, identification marks are given, our height, weight, etc. There are always some similarities between people.

There are certain identification marks which the Lord's church has which no other institution has. We invite you to compare the evidence concerning the New Testament church with any and every religious body in existence. We are going to set forth some of the identification marks of the church of Christ, so you may clearly identify it today.

The Name Of the Church

One of the most confusing things to confront an individual seeking the way of life is the multiplicity of names by which churches are called. It is most commonly designated as "*the church*." The word occurs more than one hundred times in the New Testament. It is referred to as "*the church of God*" (I Cor. 1:2); "*the body of Christ*" (Eph. 1:22-23) and "*churches of Christ*" (Rom. 16:16). When added together congregations of any size would be "the churches of Christ." When the term "church" is associated with God or when used with Christ's name, it designated **possession, ownership, or relation.**

Jesus spoke of the church He would build, "*I will build **my** church...*" (Matt. 16:18). Therefore it is **His** and is spoken of as "the church of Christ." Since He built only one church He didn't have to name it (Eph. 4:4; Col. 1:18). Had He built two or more churches names would have been necessary to distinguish them.

The Foundation

Any building which is to endure permanently must have a sure foundation. Jesus Christ is the exclusive foundation of the church. "*For other foundation can no man lay*

than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 3:11). With only a matter of months before He should be crucified, Jesus asked His disciples who men said that He was. They repeated the various answers they had heard, and He asked them directly “*But who say ye that I am?*” To His question Simon Peter answered, “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” Jesus answered, “*upon this rock I will build My church*” (Matt. 16:18). Christ’s deity is the foundation of the church as affirmed in this passage. Isaiah said, “*Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation, he that believeth shall not make haste*” (Isa. 28:16).

It Had A Specific Form of Government

There was no organization larger, smaller, or different from the local congregation (Phil. 1:1; Rom. 16:16). In the New Testament several local churches were found in a given area (Gal.1:2; I Cor. 16:1,2). Each local church was an established unit for functioning and complete to do what God wanted done. All congregations had the same gospel, savior, head, and mission. Each congregation was independent to direct its own work under the oversight of its elders. The church in Rome or Jerusalem had no authority over the churches in other areas. There was no societies, state, home, or foreign. Churches do not send delegates to “annual conventions” to deliberate, vote to impose rules, decisions, and obligations upon the church.

Each Mature Congregation Had Elders

Each local congregation had elders. Elders were the spiritual overseers of the local congregation in the first century. Each congregation was to have a plurality of elders, never just one elder (Tit. 1:5; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1). Their qualifications are listed in I Timothy chapter three, and Titus chapter one. These men were known as elders or presbyters (Acts 14:23; 20:17; I Tim. 4:14). This suggests maturity as a Christian. They were not new converts. They were also known as overseers (Acts 20:28). Finally, they were known as pastors or shepherds (Eph 4:11). This sets them apart as shepherds of the flock, but under the Chief Shepherd Who is Christ (I Pet. 5:1-4).

A Specific Form Of Worship

Christians in the first century worshipped God “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:23-24). They “*came together*” every first day of the week (the day we call Sunday) to accomplish this very thing (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2; Heb.10:24-25). When the church assembled together they engaged in five acts of worship: (1) They partook of the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-29). (2) On the same day they gave a free-will offering as they prospered (I Cor 16:1,2). (3) There was congregational singing by all members — mechanical instruments of music were not used in worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) (4) They engaged in prayer (Acts 2:42; I Thess. 5:17; I Tim. 2:1-3). (5) And they were instructed from God’s word by preaching, teaching, and reading.

The Doctrine Of The Church

Only the doctrine (teaching of Christ) was taught (2 John 9-10; Gal. 1:6-11; I Tim. 3:16-17). There are many godless individuals and groups because they have gone “*beyond the doctrine of Christ*” (2 John 9-10). The doctrine of Christ is always in the singular. The word is in the plural when referring to man’s teaching (Matt. 15:7-9. “*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God*” (2 John 9). There is a trend today in the church toward doctrinal weakness, a trend of refusing to stand for anything.

Mission Of The Church

The mission of the church was confined to a divine mission. What is the mission? (1) Preaching and supporting the truth (I Tim. 3:15; Phil. 4:15-16). (2) Edifying itself (Eph. 4:16). (3) Relief of its needy members (I Tim. 5:16; Acts 6). The work is to save souls and prepare people for eternity. It holds out to the impoverished the hope of going to heaven, It tells the tempted and persecuted that there is value in afflictions, and to rejoice. It tells all to live godly lives in whatever environment they find themselves. It seeks to change people through the power of the gospel (Rom. 1:16). Its weapons “*are not carnal, but mighty through God*” (2 Cor. 10:4). Its motivating theme: “*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*” (Matt. 16:26).

When churches become involved in social reform or recreation and entertainment, or when they build and operate schools for the education of their children, or when they see as one of the great mission to provide for the world’s poverty, or when they feel obligated in politics, or civic affairs, they have a distorted view of the purpose of the church. There is no **Bible** authority for a local church to practice centralized control of funds from many churches under one eldership.

Terms Of Admission Into The Church

Jesus Christ died for every man (Heb. 2:9). The Holy Spirit was sent by Him to the apostles that through them He might instruct and persuade men to obey the gospel. The terms are given in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48). The people on Pentecost heard the sermon Peter preached (Acts 2:13-35). They believed in Jesus (Acts 2:36); they were told to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). Upon doing this they were “*added*” to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47).

These are some of the identifying marks of the Lord’s church. If the church of which you are a member does not have these marks, it is not the Lord’s church. His church is all that He promised to save (Eph. 5:23). You must be a part of the church revealed in the Bible to be saved in this life and in eternity. Compare and study. Settle for nothing but **the truth**.

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Give Me The Truth

By Bill Crews

If you are my friend, if you are concerned about my soul, give me the truth. Do not flatter me. Do not praise my virtues while remaining silent about my vices. Do not fear the truth will offend me. Do not treasure our friendship, our friendly relations about my salvation. Do not think that by ignoring my sins, you can help me. Do not think that being blind to my sins will prove yourself charitable. However I may react to it, whatever may be my attitude toward you after you have done it, **give me the truth**. For the truth, and only the truth, can make me free from the shackles of sin, strengthen me in the pathway of righteousness and lead me to the joys of heaven. If I am wavering, weak, lukewarm, indifferent, neglectful; if I have been overtaken in a trespass; if I have been drawn into the pleasures of the world; if I have left my first love; if I have been led astray by error; or if I have done none of these, but simply need to grow in knowledge and to be edified, **give me the truth**. —Copied

*“Sanctify them by your truth; Your **word is truth**” (John 17:17). “And you shall know the truth, and **the truth** shall make you free” (John 8:32).*