



Today's Sermons
 Morning: At The Cross...
 Evening: Pure Religion

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VI. It is the body of Christ. Speaking of the exaltation of Christ after his resurrection, the apostle Paul says that God "put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22, 23). Again Paul says of him, "He is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18). These passages show clearly that the church is the body of Christ. Hence, when the New Testament speaks of his body, it refers not to the physical body of Christ, but to the spiritual body, which is the church. In referring to the spiritual body of Christ,, Paul says, "There is one body" (Eph. 4:4). Since there is but one body, and that body is the church, there can be but one New Testament church. - Let us note in passing that: (1) All Christians are in Christ; (2) All who are in Christ are in his body; (3) All who are in the body of Christ are in his church; (4) There-fore, all Christians are in Christ's church. When we view the church from the various angles presented by the New Testament, we are better able to appreciate its beauty and comprehend its divine nature. If we have in mind a group of Christians who have been called out from the world and who assemble themselves together to fellowship one another and worship God, it is called the church. If each individual Christian is thought. of as a necessary part in a great structure, then it is a building. If we think of every Christian being authorized to offer spiritual sacrifices to God, with every Christian a priest and Christ the high priest, then it is a priesthood. If we think of Christ as our King and all his disciples as his subjects, it is a kingdom. If we have in mind the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, it is a family. If we think of Christ as the head of a great spiritual organization and all Christians as members of it, then it is a body. These figures are employed by the New Testament writers to enable us to gain a clear conception of the New Testament church. When we see it as it is-so far superior to all human institutions-we marvel that anyone should be misled into denominationalism by the devices of men.



A Weekly Publication of the
West Jefferson Church of Christ
 130 Robert Street
 West Jefferson NC 28694
 Phone: (336) 846-5615 | Email: info@wjchurchofchrist.org
 Volume VIII December 13, 2015 Number 50

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Times of Services:
Sunday
 Bible Study:... 10:00am
 AM Worship...11:00am
 PM Worship:...6:00pm

Wednesday
 Bible Study:.....7:00pm

Radio Program
 Sunday:.....7:30am
 "Back to the Bible"
 AM 580 WSKS
 93.5 FM

**We Extend A
 Warm &
 Cordial
 Welcome
 To All Our
 Visitors!**

"What Is The New Testament Church?"
 Author Unknown ~ Selected

We have become so accustomed to thinking in terms of denominationalism that when we speak of the New Testament church it is often difficult for us to distinguish between them. Many people cannot conceive of an institution that is not of human origin. Hence, we often fail to appreciate the true nature of the New Testament church. However, if we will put out of our minds all preconceived notions of organized religion and examine carefully the New Testament picture of the church, we will have no difficulty in grasping its beauty and meaning.

When we read of Christ building his church, we do not think of denominationalism at all, but of a sacred institution conceived in the mind of God and established by the Lord. We do not think of the apostles contending for denominationalism, nor of the disciples as members of opposing factions. They were all united-members of the same body. When division arose, the apostle Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10). No one argues that denominationalism existed in New Testament times, but all religious groups agree that division is of human origin. Hence, when we speak of the New Testament church, we do not have in mind some human institution, but the church that Jesus built, of which the apostles and all other Christians in apostolic times were members. It is the greatest institution in all the world-as far superior to human organizations as the heavens are higher than the earth. ~ *Continued Inside*

Since the church is a divine institution, unlike any other in the world, it has been presented to us by a number of figures that we might better appreciate it. These terms are not used to describe different institutions, but are different aspects of the same institution. The angle from which we view it determines the figure used. Let us now notice some of these figures.

I. It is the church. Before his crucifixion, Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). This was accomplished, through the apostles, on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. Thereafter the church was spoken of as a reality-something already in existence. In its original meaning the term "church" signifies a called out congregation. The ancient Greeks applied it to a political body. Stephen applied it to the Israelites in the time of Moses, calling them "the church in the wilderness." While the word "church" signifies no more than a called out congregation, the church of Christ means much more. When the Lord speaks of his church, he has in mind an institution composed of his followers, who have been called out of the world by the gospel of Christ. Thus all the saints—all those who have obeyed the gospel—are members of the New Testament church, where they have fellowship one with another, and worship God "in Spirit and in truth."

II. It is God's building. The apostle Peter says, "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house" (I Peter 2:5). Paul said, "Ye are God's husbandry, God's building" (I Cor. 3:9). Again, "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2: 19-21). Let us not mistake our Lord's house for a material structure. When the church is spoken of as a building, a spiritual house is meant. We often refer to our place of meeting as the "church"; but this is an "accommodated" use of the term. The New Testament church is a spiritual house, in which Christ is the "chief corner stone" and the members are the "living stones" that compose it.

III. It is a royal priesthood. In this same passage, the apostle Peter says, "Ye . . . are built up a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ . . . Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Peter 2:5, 9). Just as all Christians are built into a spiritual house, they are also priests who offer spiritual sacrifices to God within God's building. The "spiritual sacrifices" denote Christian work and worship. Under the law of Moses the priest entered the house of God to offer sacrifices. Likewise, we must be in God's spiritual house before our worship—our spiritual sacrifice—is acceptable. The church, then, is spoken of as a holy and royal priesthood, in which every Christian is a priest. No order of priests, however, would be complete without a high priest. We have no man as our head, but Christ is our "high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:20).

IV. It is a kingdom. Whether we speak of the church as the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, we have in mind the same institution. Jesus said, "All things that are mine are thine, and all thine are mine" (John 17:10). Hence, the kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God is the kingdom of Christ. It is called the kingdom of heaven because it is from heaven, rather than of the world. People often attempt to distinguish between the kingdom and the church; but both terms refer to the same institution. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt. 16:18, 19). Here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, "church" and "kingdom" are used interchangeably to denote the same institution. Thus, when Peter used the "keys" to the kingdom on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, to make known the terms of entrance into it, he announced the terms of entrance into the church at the same time. Similarly, when Christ instituted the Lord's supper, he said to his apostles, "I shall not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Mt. 26:29). A short time later we find the apostles observing the Lord's supper in the church (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 11:20-34). Since Christ instituted his supper to be observed in his kingdom, and since his apostles understood this to mean the church, it is evident that the church and kingdom are one and the same institution.

V. It is the family of God. To the youthful evangelist Timothy, Paul said, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:14, 15). The term "house" here signifies "household" or "family." It is used in the same sense as in Acts 10:2, where we read that Cornelius "feared God with all his house," and in Acts 16:31, where the Philippian jailor was told to believe on the Lord Jesus with all "thy house." The meaning in each of these instances is family, or household. In conversion man is pictured as being "born again." Thus Jesus says, "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3). In referring to Christians—those who have been born again—Paul says, "Ye are sons," or "children" of God" (2 Cor. 8:12-17). Thus, by the new birth man becomes a child of God, and by the same process he becomes a member of God's household or family. We may join the institutions of men, but we enter—the family of God only by the new birth. ~ **Continued on Back**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Dec 13 – Preach & Eat – 1:30 Service.
- Dec 18 – Get-Together @ Powers' Home – 6:00 pm.
- Please give support money for Chinese orphans to Minnie Kennell
- Wireless Internet Password: 94615548