

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

by Dub McClish

If the church as God planned it and Christ built it is to exist in any age, there are certain principles to which men must be committed. As surely as any of these principles are abandoned, so surely will the New Testament church cease to exist. Consider the following necessary principles:

A COMMITMENT TO THE ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

His authority is emphasized each time the New Testament calls Him “Lord.” His miracles were for the purpose of establishing His Divine authority and identity (John 20:30–31). This commitment includes the recognition that the church belongs to Him and He alone has the right to determine every feature of it. Until all men who claim to follow Christ allow Him alone to be the head of the church, religious confusion must reign.

A COMMITMENT TO THE NEW TESTAMENT AS THE FINAL AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

Christ expresses His authority through the New Testament alone. No alleged claims of latter-day revelations (e.g., *The Book of Mormon*), prophets (e.g., Joseph Smith), nor direct guidance of the Holy Spirit can be accepted by people who are serious about the New Testament church. This principle also relates to the Old Testament. It is inspired history and is necessary for our understanding of God and His plan of redemption through His Son. However, God no more gave the Law of Moses to govern men since the cross than He gave the Law of Christ (the Gospel) to govern men before the cross (Colossians 2:14).

A COMMITMENT TO THE NEW TESTAMENT PLAN OF SALVATION

The only efficacious plan of salvation in the world is the one made possible by the cross and revealed in the New Testament. It is a plan of grace and faith, but not grace only and faith only. It requires man’s response of faith in Christ, repentance, confession of one’s faith, immersion in water for forgiveness of sins, and living faithfully as a Christian. Baptism either is or is not necessary for salvation—it cannot be both. The New Testament says it is necessary (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3–4; 1 Peter 3:21).

A COMMITMENT TO THE IDENTITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Jesus Christ built the church according to His own wise plan. He prescribed its terms of entrance, its designations, its worship, its work, and how it is to be organized and financed. If one does not learn its identifying characteristics, he can never know if or when he has found it or is in it. If the identity of the church is unimportant, why is anything about it important?

A COMMITMENT TO PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL AS THE FOREMOST TASK OF THE CHURCH

Jesus came to earth to accomplish one great work and purpose—to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Such is likewise the compelling work of His church (1 Timothy 3:15).

THE LORD’S CHURCH IS NOT A DENOMINATION

by Curtis A. Cates

Tertullus, a Jewish orator, erroneously termed the Lord’s church a sect, or heresy, or denomination; he accused Paul of being “*a ringleader of the sect (Greek haireisis) of the Nazarenes*” (Acts 24:5), a pest. Countless others, even in the present age, have brought this charge against the body, or church of Christ.

Paul answered the charge; “*after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers*” (Acts 24:14). He was “*set for the defense of the gospel*” (Philippians 1:7); he did not allow such error to go unchallenged. The church of the New Testament is sometimes still accused of being a denomination.

Inasmuch as all denominations possess and are built around certain peculiar false doctrines [“*commandments of men*” (Matthew 15:9,13)] and are thus “*plants which my heavenly Father hath not planted*” but “*shall be rooted up*” come judgment day, if indeed the Lord’s church is a heresy, or denomination, as charged, then it must be based upon, teach, and practice certain errors which identify it as a denomination, sect, or party.

Is the church of Christ a denomination because of its foundation? It is founded upon the fact of Christ’s being the only begotten Son of God (Matthew 16:15–18). He is the prophesied “*sure foundation*” (Isaiah 28:26; 1

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continued from page 1

Peter 2:6-8) and the stone which the builders rejected (Acts 4:11). Sects are founded upon human beings.

Is the church a denomination because of its builder? The **Branch** would build the temple of the Lord (Zechariah 6:12; Isaiah 11:1,2; Jeremiah 23:5). The temple is the church of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16). Christ built His church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:25), and He built only one (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 4:3-6; 1 Corinthians 12:20). Christ is the only head. Sects are built by men, not by Christ.

Is the church a denomination because of its time and place of establishment? It was not built during Christ's personal ministry or during the time of John, for after John died (Matthew 14:10), Christ promised to build His church/kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19). It was built on Pentecost of Acts 2 (compare with Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,47). People were in the kingdom during the time of the apostles (Acts 20:28; Colossians 1:13; 1 Timothy 3:14,15; Hebrews 12:28;

Revelation 1:9). And, it was established in Jerusalem, as prophesied (Isaiah 2:1-4; Zechariah 1:16; 1 Timothy 3:15). The foundation was laid in Jerusalem (Isaiah 28:16). Sects are established at other times and in other places.

Is the church a denomination because of its designation? The church in the general sense (inclusive of all Christians) is called the church, kingdom, body of Christ, kingdom of God's dear Son, house of God, church of God, kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:18,19; John 18:36; Colossians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22; et al.). Mentioned in the local sense [individual congregations], it is called the church of God, churches of Christ, churches of God, churches (1 Corinthians 1:2; 11:16; 16:19; Romans 16:16; Galatians 1:2; Acts 9:31; 16:5; et al.). Sects most often wear designations unauthorized by the Bible.

Is the church a denomination because of the name of her members? Saints wear the new name, the everlasting name given in God's house (Isaiah 56:5; 62:2; 65:15). Given by God, it is the name Christian (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). Sects wear names which honor various creeds, acts of obedience, human beings, etc.

Is the church a denomination because of its doctrine? Her evangelists and members speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 1 Corinthians 14:37). Thus, they speak where the Bible speaks, and are silent where the Bible is silent. They do Bible things in Bible ways, and call Bible things by Bible names. They take great care not to deviate from the divine pattern (2 Timothy 1:13; 2 John 9-11; Revelation 22:18,19). Sects *"teach for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Matthew 15:9).

Is the church a denomination because of its worship? Does it meet on the wrong day to partake of the Lord's Supper and give, as well as worshipping God in song, prayer and teaching? (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1

Corinthians 16:1-2). It does not keep the so-called "Christian sabbath." One might just as well talk about "Christian animal sacrifices" or "Christian incense." The church worships God on other days also, but it especially meets on a certain designated day, the Lord's day, "the day the Lord hath made," when Christ became the head of the corner, the first day of the week, to perform those certain acts of worship mentioned above.

Does the church perform the wrong acts of worship, partaking of the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine on the Lord's Day, and not profaning the Lord's Supper with hot dogs and carbonated beverage, or partaking of it other than on each first day of the week? Or, is it wrong simply to sing as the gospel authorizes? The early church did not worship with mechanical accompaniment or with the sound of instruments (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Or, further, is the church denominational because she gives freewill offerings; not having bazaars and suppers, or stunts and gimmicks to raise money? Is she sectarian because she refuses to beg for listeners/viewers to send in support for radio/television programs? (1 Corinthians 16:1,2). Or, still further, is it wrong to study the Word, without addition, subtraction or substitution; without human philosophy or tradition? (1 Peter 4:11; 2 John 9-11). Or, even further, is it sectarian to pray directly to God through Christ, our mediator, without additional intercession of a "priest" or a "senior prayer partner confessor"?

Does the church sin by meeting in the assembly not for being entertained nor for seeing and being seen, but for the purpose of honoring and worshipping, praising God with the whole heart? (John 4:23,24). Sectarian worship is not identical to that of the New Testament.

Is the church a denomination because of its work? Called out of the world in *"one body"* (Colossians 3:15; 1 Peter 2:9), the church is saved to save others. It is *"created in Christ Jesus*

for good works” (Ephesians 2:10) and always abounds in the “work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). The work includes preaching the gospel (Matthew 28:19,20; Romans 1:14-16); living and supporting the truth financially (Romans 10:10-16; 1 Timothy 3:14-15); defending the gospel against error (Philippians 1:17; Jude 3); edifying the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:14-16); comforting the bereaved and encouraging the downtrodden (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Acts 16:40); supporting the needy (James 5:19,20). Sects have lost sight of the work of God’s people, often substituting recreation and more. The mission of the church is the same that brought Christ to earth (Luke 19:10).

The New Testament church is not a sect, and it is a grievous sin to designate it thus.

THE CHURCH

by Andrew Connally (1931-1992)

The church is not made up of people who believe they are better than others, but rather it is made up of those who realize that they should be better than they are and must continually strive to do better always.

The church is not made up of people who never make mistakes, but those who often acknowledge their mistakes and then forsake them. Never must we seek to justify them or continually make the same mistakes over and over again.

The church is not trying to withdraw from everyone, but rather to draw everyone into its fellowship and love who are willing to walk in the light where God the Father and Christ the Son are found.

The church is not trying to set up arbitrary rules to hinder anyone, but rather is trying to put real joy into every life it touches.

The church is not trying to make you feel ugly, but rather it is trying to instill the beauty of holiness in your life.

The church is not trying to separate you from your money, but rather is trying to keep your money from separating you from God.

The church is not trying to become the master of your life, but rather is trying to get you to master yourself.

The church is not trying to rob your life of priorities, but rather is trying to get you to put the priorities in the proper order.

WHY BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

by Paul Sain

Why should a person become a member of the church of Christ? I wish to offer several reasons. The Scriptures are found at the end of each reason. Therefore, please take full advantage of the reasons given by taking your Bible and looking up the references carefully.

1. Because it was founded by the Scriptural builder – Christ (Matthew 16:18).
2. Because it was founded on the Scriptural foundation (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20).
3. Because it was founded at the Scriptural place – Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2).
4. Because it was founded at the Scriptural time – Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2 – the church is used in the present tense).
5. Because it has a Scriptural name (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16).
6. Because it is Scriptural in organization (Philippians 1:1).

7. Because it has the Bible as its only creed (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3).

8. Because it is undenominational (John 17:20-21).

9. Because it teaches and administers Scriptural baptism (Matthew 28:18-19; Acts 2:38; John 3:23; Romans 6:4). It is immersion (Acts 8:38).

10. Because it gives Scriptural answers to the question “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16).

11. Because of its Scriptural teaching and observance of the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-25; Acts 20:7; Acts 2:42).

12. Because it has Scriptural music in worship (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

13. Because salvation is in Christ’s church (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18; Acts 2:47).

Friend, why not obey the simple gospel of Christ today? Sin condemns one’s soul eternally—but God has given His son, making it possible for

sin to be removed through obedience to the Son’s will for mankind today. But, all is in vain unless one obeys!

There are so many “religions”; it is confusing until one can objectively view the Bible. Upon looking to the Old Testament, we can see the kingdom (church) in prophecy: the Messiah would come, and details were given that man could identify Him. Then, in the life of Christ, the Son actually stated that some were hearing His voice who would not taste of death until the kingdom (church) came with power (Mark 9:1). Acts 2 records for us some of the events that took place on the day of Pentecost – the time when the Lord’s church began.

We can become a member of that same church today—the one that Christ said He would build (Matthew 16:18) – the one that is found within the pages of the inspired Bible. By doing today what they did then, we can become today what they became then—just Christians!

If we can assist you in your obedience to Christ, please allow us to do so.

LET'S STUDY THE BIBLE

The church of Christ in your area has a number of **free** Bible Study services to offer you. If you have a desire to study the Scriptures to come to an understanding of God's will for you, or to make certain that you know what to do to be saved and remain saved, we will be delighted to sit down with you in your own home and study the Bible with you. If you would like to study through a Bible Correspondence Course, we will gladly lead you through such a course by mail. If you desire a Bible tract on a particular subject, we will do our best to locate material on the subject you request and get that to you. If you have questions about any of the articles that appear in **Fulton County Gospel News** or any other Bible topic, we will do our best to give you an answer from the Bible. Of course, there are no charges for any of these services offered by churches of Christ.

Our street address and Post Office box number, phone numbers, fax number, and e-mail address can be found in the box on page two of each issue of **FCGN**. If you need help locating a faithful church of Christ in your area, let us know and we will assist you in making contact with them. Contact us or the church of Christ in your area if we can help you in any of the ways above. If you call or write, be sure to give complete information as to your name, address, telephone number and your request for information or materials. - Mammoth Spring Church of Christ

REMINDER ABOUT ADDRESS CHANGES

We want to remind you that the Post Office does not send us your address changes when your county or city goes to 911 Emergency addressing!

Please help us and yourself by keeping your address information with us up to date.

E-mail subscribers, also remember to send us any changes in your e-mail addresses.

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS NOW ONLINE!

It has been a long time coming, but readers will be happy to know that current and past issues of the **Fulton County Gospel News** are now available on the Internet at:

www.fultoncountygospelnews.org
 Issues will be updated each month online just as currently as those sent by mail. Back issues currently go back as far as September 2003, and this will be gradually expanded. Special thanks are due to brother **Jody Apple** and **TheBible.net** for his work in bringing this all together and for hosting our content. It was his initiative that got the proverbial ball rolling, and it was his foresight and work that made this reality. It is our hope and prayer that this website will be an effective tool toward proclaiming "Good news about Christ and his church for all of the world."

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Mr. & Mrs. Charles Tostige (Falmouth, MI)	50.00

GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16: 1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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