

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONTINUING AS FROM THE BEGINNING

We have examined carefully the ONENESS of the church: Christ built but ONE. It has but ONE time and place of beginning. The members have ONE name. It has ONE way of obedience. It has ONE pattern of worship. It has ONE God-established government. This lesson will be a bit different from others, as we must look at TODAY. Paul obligated us to “Examine [our]selves, whether [we] be in the faith; prove [our] own selves. Know [we] not [our] own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in [us], except [we] be reprobates.” (2 Corinthians 13:5)

Remember Christian, YOU are a part of the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). As such, it depends largely on YOU as to the continuance of the church as it was in the beginning. As we mentioned in Chapter One, the resulting “many religions” came because some discontented member(s) of the Lord’s church thought he had a better idea than God (1 John 2:19). If the church is to continue as it was in the beginning, then we must mind the same rule (Philippians 3:16 – 17).



CONTINUING AS FROM THE BEGINNING (Outlined Lesson)

1 John 2: 15 – 17

- I. FAITHFULNESS IS THE CHURCH DEPENDS ON ITS MEMBERS
 - A. 1 Corinthians 12:13
 - B. Ephesians 5: 1- 17
 - C. Titus 2: 11 – 15

- II. ONLY THE CHURCH CONTAINS THE TRUTH
 - A. Ephesians 3: 8 – 12
 - B. 2 Timothy 2:15
 - C. Titus 2:1
 - D. Colossians 3:17

- III. THE CHURCH MUST NOT CONFORM TO THE WORLD AROUND IT
 - A. Romans 12:1 – 2
 - B. James 1:27
 - C. 1 Timothy 4: 11 – 12
 - D. 1 John 4: 1- 6

- IV. THE PATTERN WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE BEGINNING
 - A. Its time and place are of God ONLY
 - B. Its name is of God ONLY
 - C. There is but ONE church

V. BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH AS SEEN IN THE BEGINNING

- A. It alone contains the truth
 - 1. John 14:6
 - 2. 1 Timothy 3:14 – 15
 - 3. Ephesians 3:10
- B. It trains and cares for its own
 - 1. 1 Timothy 5: 7 – 8
 - 2. Titus 2:1 – 8
 - 3. 1 Timothy 4: 11 – 16
 - 4. Ephesians 4: 16 – 24
- C. It exalts Christ and not man
 - 1. Ephesians 4:11 – 16
 - 2. 2 Peter 1:3
 - 3. Ephesians 1:22 – 23; Colossians 1:18
 - 4. Colossians 3: 16 – 17
- D. It ONLY will be presented to God the Father
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 15:24
 - 2. Ephesians 5: 25 – 32

VI. WORLDLINESS CORRUPTS THE CHURCH

- A. 2 Corinthians 6: 14 – 18
- B. 2 Corinthians 2: 14 – 17
- C. Romans 12:1 – 2
- D. 2 Peter 1: 1 – 4

VII. MAN CAN NEVER SUBSTITUTE FOR GOD'S PATTERN

- A. If the church is dependent upon man's creation to do God's work, then God created an imperfect body for His perfect Son.
- B. 1 John 2: 15 – 17
- C. Romans 16:17 – 18
- D. Ephesians 5:25 – 33
- E. Matthew 15: 8 – 9
- F. 1 Timothy 4: 1 – 10



Discussion:

Remember the following facts:

- 1. "And He is THE head of THE body, THE church ... (Colossians 1:18)
- 2. The name of the church and its members shows ownership being Christ and not man.
- 3. Its rule is the New Testament without any further book. Any addition or subtraction from this rule is not justified by God and is not tolerated by those who faithfully serve Him.

If nothing else is noted from the previous studies, these facts will be enough to satisfy the understanding of ONE church, ONE Ruler/Head/King and ONE rule governing the church. Christ alone is the HEAD. It is called THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. This Head (Owner) has demanded strict adherence to His word: “He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: ...” (John 12:48) If the church is to continue as it was in the beginning, (Acts 2), we members will have to be keenly aware of our faithfulness.

It is true the church is comprised of human beings who have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered them (Romans 6:17); i.e. they have been baptized for the remission of their sins and in that manner “put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). Peter says we are “lively stones, built up a spiritual house.” (1 Peter 2:1 – 10) While we may be human beings, when we obeyed the gospel we CRUCIFIED THE OLD MAN OF SIN (Romans 6:1 – 12). As such, sin is not to reign in our mortal bodies. (Romans 6:12). We are not to obey sin in the lusts thereof. (ibid.) The apostle John said, “...the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” (1 John 2:16) It is the “pride of life” some members of the church try to “resurrect” and have the local church of Christ of which they are a part be the biggest, the best and the most ... according to man’s standard and not God’s!

The book of Revelation in chapters 2 – 3 records seven letters dictated by Jesus Christ to local churches of Christ. To one of them, the Lord had nothing but praise; to another He could say nothing good. To the other five, they were drifting from the truth and had various corrections they had to make in order to be restored to their first love. There are other passages of scripture showing conclusively some “shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils,” (1 Timothy 4:11). In every case of departure, it was because the MEMBERS were not faithful in proving all things and holding fast that which is good (1 John 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Seeing the church alone contains the truth (Ephesians 3:8 – 12), its members are responsible for declaring that same truth (Titus 2:1). The only way we are going to know the truth in order to proclaim the truth and in order to know when those professing the truth are truly teaching the truth (1 John 4: 1- 6) is to learn the truth ourselves! (2 Timothy 2:15) We can use no authority but the Word of God for proof of these lessons (Revelation 22: 18 – 19), as adding to the truth or taking away from the truth will most certainly condemn our souls! This also demands individual members refrain from conforming to the world around us (Romans 12:1 – 2). It is one thing to be IN this world and quite another thing to be OF this world. James tells us each one is “to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27)

Through these past lessons, we have noted how God established the pattern of the church within His mind in the beginning. We carefully examined how the church had a particular time and place of beginning; how its name was

given by God; and that the church of Christ shows its ownership to be of Jesus Christ and not of man. And, most certainly, the fact there is but ONE CHURCH. Let us now look at the characteristics peculiar to the church of Christ.

Unlike religious groups of man-made nature, the church of Christ trains and cares for its own. Being called the house of God (1 Timothy 3:14 – 15), it stands to reason the church cares for its own as instructed in 1 Timothy 5: 7 – 8. Titus 2: 1 – 8 teaches the care older men must give younger men, the care older women are to give younger women, the respect due the older persons and the respect due each other. Paul gave Timothy a list of things to practice (1 Timothy 4:11 – 16) allowing him to take care of himself and properly instruct those who heard him. Paul explains the proper care of widows indeed, (1 Timothy 5:3 – 16). Concern for the fatherless and widows, James explains (James 1:27). Those IN THE CHURCH with the knowledge and skill to train men and women in the Lord's service are commanded to do so (2 Timothy 2:2). Never in all the New Testament was an institution built to do the work God gave to the church of Christ. Remember: IF THE CHURCH MUST DEPEND ON MAN-MADE THINGS TO COMPLETE ITS CARE AND TRAINING OF ITS OWN, THEN GOD CREATED AN IMPERFECT BODY FOR HIS PERFECT SON!

Unlike man-made religious groups, the church exalts Christ and not man. Preachers within the church of Christ are not officers, but proclaimers of the truth. They must never exalt themselves or another man, but rather Christ! From time to time as others might wish to exalt the preacher, the preacher must stifle such praise as being unworthy, ungodly, and subtracting from the praise and glory due Christ, the Head of the church!

Unlike man-made religions, the church is the ONLY REDEEMED BODY CHRIST WILL DELIVER TO GOD THE FATHER (1 Corinthians 15:24). Jesus proclaimed, "Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." (Matthew 15:13) Paul said, As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." (Colossians 2: 6 – 7, emp. mjd) From a study of these passages, it is plain that unless the plant (religious group) has its roots in Christ only, that plant (religious group) shall be rooted up. We say again, unlike man-made religions, the CHURCH of Christ is the ONLY church Christ shall deliver to the Father. All others shall be lost (1 Corinthians 15:24 – 28).

Some ask, "If the church of Christ changes to conform to the opinions and desires of its members, does it continue to be the church of Christ?" It is certainly true we must NEVER be conformed to worldliness (Romans 12:1 – 2), but transformed by the renewing of our minds that we may prove what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God – NOT MAN. However, to the seven churches of Christ in Asia the Lord addressed (Revelation 2 – 3), five were told, "...thou hast some which have not ..." They were recognized as churches of Christ, but

their works were not found perfect before the Lord. If they failed to repent, the candlestick was removed. Note this is not the light but the holder of the light. The element which destroyed the soundness of these individual churches was worldliness in the place of godliness. It became the responsibility of those who were found faithful to “strengthen the things which remain.” Dear student, THAT SAME TRUTH REMAINS TODAY!

Paul wrote to Corinth the second time and was plain about these brethren joining godly things to worldly things. II Corinthians 6: 14 – 19 says, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ... come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord.” There must be NO union of worldly organizations and the church. Nor shall there be any union of worldly ideas and/or practices with the children of God! Paul said, “for we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.” (2 Corinthians 2:17)

Man cannot substitute his ideas for God’s truth. We have said repeatedly: IF THE CHURCH MUST DEPEND ON THE CREATIONS OF MAN TO DO ITS GOD-GIVEN WORK, THEN GOD CREATED AN IMPERFECT BODY FOR HIS PERFECT SON! Sincerely, I know of no one who believes his idea will be greater than God’s. Still, by their actions and support of various and sundry ideas and/or organizations attaching themselves to the church of Christ for their continued support, they indicate the opposite! John said we are to “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” (1 John 2:15) Some will continue their practice of support for man-made conceptions and bind the support of the same to the Lord’s church: i.e. the treasury of the local body of Christ. Such is wrong and does NOT allow the church of Christ to continue as it was from the beginning. If the church of Christ is to continue as it was in the beginning, these things ought NOT so to be (James 3: 1 – 10)

Put simply, the church of Christ and its continued practice of truth and righteousness depends on each one of its members. We must walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). All things must be proven by this word (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Whatever we do in word or deed must have the authority of Jesus Christ before it can be done (Colossians 3:17). Doing this, we will “continue ... in the things which [we have] learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom [we] hast learned them; and ... hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make [us] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14 – 15)

Does the church continue as it was from the beginning? YES!! Where nothing but the TRUTH is welcomed, where all teacher are tried according to the scripture, where the only plan of salvation is taught and upheld, where faithfulness in all things is insisted upon, where the pattern of worship is held sacred, where the Bible alone is the authority by which government of the church is directed, where these God-given requirements are met exactly, this is the

church of Christ – the Lord’s church! If there are man-made items held as truth, God’s instructions stand: “Repent ...” (Revelation 2:16) and “...strengthen the things which remain ...” (Revelation 3:2). May it be we are each found in the Lord’s church: clean, pure, and ready for His coming.

In His Name,
Amen



Conclusion:

Rather than written questions asked at the close of this study, it is suggested you ask the questions. By now, you should have a knowledge of what the church of Christ is and how it must be kept. You should have a knowledge of the plan of salvation and be keenly aware of the government Christ established within His church. Any questions you have can be answered by a study of His divine will (2 Peter 1:3). We will be happy to study with you concerning these matters. May God bless you in rightful things.