

CHAPTER THREE: THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

We have examined carefully two facts concerning the church:

1. There is but ONE.
2. It began after Christ's resurrection in Jerusalem.

These facts easily determine no other religious organization can be THE CHURCH God had in His mind from the beginning. Regardless of how zealous the devotion or dedication to these religious organizations, God sanctions none other than THE CHURCH; the ONE He planned and brought into being in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Some will argue the name to be unimportant. They feel the "universal" name is "church" and whatever precedes that name matters not at all. They wrongfully conclude the church can be the "_____ church" or the "_____ church of Christ," or the "church of the _____." So long as "church" is included in the name, they feel content.

We now examine the fact God named the church: He also named the people within the church. We will show these two names are not the same. He named the church one thing and the people within it another name. Both are God-given names, and Man does not have the right to change the names!

THE NAME OF THE CHURCH (Outlined Lesson)

Text: Matthew 16:13 – 19

- I. There is a difference between the name God gave His people and the name He gave the church.
 - A. Isaiah 62:2 – name given to PEOPLE not things
 - B. Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16 – CHRISTIAN is the name given to God's PEOPLE.
 - C. CHRISTIAN is never used as an adjective and the three times it is used in the New Testament, it is used in calling PEOPLE (obedient souls) by a name. It is NEVER used as an adjective in describing objects such as love, fellowship, life or even the church.
- II. The name of the church.
 - A. Terms used for the church:
 1. Bride – Revelation 21:9; Ephesians 5:22 – 33
 2. Body – Ephesians 1:22 – 23; Colossians 1:18

3. Kingdom –
 - a. Of heaven – Matthew 3:2; 6:19
 - b. Of God – Matthew 6:33
 - c. Of Christ – Ephesians 5:5
 - d. Of His dear Son – Colossians 1:13
 4. Church – (Matthew 16:18)
 - a. Of God – Acts 20:28
 - b. Of Christ – Romans 16:16
 5. House of God – 1 Timothy 3:14 – 15
- B. Each name refers to Christ
- C. Let the name distinguish it (the church) as the only religious organization
- D. Names declare ---
1. family heritage
 2. ownership
 3. individual designation
 4. CHURCH OF CHRIST declares each of these three aspects scripturally

III. The meaning of the name

- A. Church = “the called out”
1. 1 Peter 2: 9 – 10
 2. Romans 1: 1 – 7
- B. Church of Christ (declaring ownership)
1. Acts 20:26
 2. Ephesians 3: 1- 12
- C. Church of Christ
1. Matthew 16:18
 2. Acts 20:28
 3. Romans 16:16

Conclusion:

If a group does not honor Christ by having His name only (Acts 4:12), how can that group be honorable in the sight of God as the church He created (Ephesians 3:10 – 11)?

Discussion:

There are many who believe the name is not all that important. First, if there argument were true, how would they feel if their name were considered unimportant? If there is nothing in a name, then why place so much value in the need for verification of checks, loans, titles and deeds, etc.? It is foolish to think there is nothing in a name when all businesses around us prove beyond question the opposite is true!

Names declare family heritage, ownership and individual designation. For the name Christ, the family heritage is the ONLY one traced to God the Father directly (Luke 3:23 – 38). Thus, the heritage of the name is beyond question as being blessed by God (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). It shows ownership of the church belonging to Christ as the purchaser (Acts 20:28). And it grants His individual designation in that He proved Himself to be the only begotten Son of God (1 John 3:16; Acts 17:31).

It is important to place the right name on the right subject. God named His people and the church. These two names are NOT the same. In Isaiah 62:2, God said He would give His PEOPLE a new name. God had called them “Israel” for hundreds of years. Even at the beginning of the church (Acts 2), we find no new name given. Understand the prophesy had been stated that both kings and Gentiles would hear the gospel before this name was given. At Acts 10, Cornelius was granted the privilege of hearing the gospel and commanded to be baptized (Acts 10:48). Still, we find no new name. At Acts 11:26, Paul is found working with the brethren in Antioch. Verse 26 says, “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” Note it was DISCIPLES who were named and NOT THE CHURCH! We will explain how the MEMBERS of the church are the church (1 Peter 2: 1- 10), but the church is not called CHRISTIAN. At Acts 26:28, king Agrippa was almost persuaded to be a CHRISTIAN. It was not the name of the church, but rather the name of the PEOPLE within the church. Peter says “if any man suffer as a CHRISITAN, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.” (1 Peter 4:16)

While it is true that the souls of the obedient comprise the church (1 Corinthians 12: 12 – 13, 1 Peter 2: 1- 10), remember it is not the CHURCH that is called Christian; rather it is THE PEOPLE WITHIN THE CHURCH. Some say, “Since Christians comprise the church, why not call the church, ‘Christian church’?” The reason is simple: NO CHRISTIAN OWNS THE CHURCH! We did not purchase the church with our shed blood (Acts 20:28). We are merely permitted to be members within this blood bought body of Christ Jesus.

Of the names listed on the outline lesson concerning the church, we should take note these are DESCRIPTIVE NAMES, more than “titles”. Each shows ownership to Christ Jesus, thus expressing the identifying factors of a name: ownership, family heritage and individual designation. Some suggest the name “carved in stone over the door” is the only identity permitted of the Lord’s church. As we will see, these DESCRIPTIVE NAMES identify the Lord’s church as being JUST ONE CHURCH, BELONGING TO JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD. Thus, there is no discrepancy in any of these names.

The most misunderstood name of the Lord’s church is CHURCH OF GOD. It has been argued that this name for the church is found more often in the New Testament than the name church of Christ. The multiplicity of times this name

appears is not in dispute. However, each time it is found the name refers to Jesus Christ (God the Son) and not to Jehovah God (God the Father.) Let us examine Acts 20:28 for the proof.

Paul is talking with the elders of the Lord's church at Ephesus. He says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." According to John (1 John 5:7), "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father (Jehovah God), the Word (Jesus Christ – John 1:1 – 4; 14), and the Holy Ghost (God the Spirit): and these three are one, " (i.e. they are one in agreement.) Matthew 3:13 – 17 relates these three separate Beings are each seen in a separate part. Jesus is baptized by John the baptizer. The Spirit descends upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and the voice of God the Father speaks from heaven. This proves three Beings of the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Note again Acts 20:28. Was it God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost who purchased the church with His own blood? Certainly, we know it was God the Son, Jesus Christ. The church (the called out; those who are the redeemed), the entire body, bride, and kingdom is known as the church of Christ. Christ, not the member, is the Sole Owner of this purchased house of God.

Let us study one more passage: 1 Timothy 3:14 – 15 – "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Notice the singular of "the house of God, ... the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth." Here we note JUST ONE HOUSE, thus JUST ONE CHURCH. Just as you have the right to call your house by your name, (example: the house of Jones), God has the right to call His church, (house) by His name, Since it was His Son who purchased it, and called it His own (Matthew 16:18), God permitted it His name: the church of Christ. When we read in Romans 16:16, "the churches of Christ salute you," we note these were autonomous groups of Christians, each group being "the called out" of that area and therefore the church of Christ at Ephesus, Colossi, Philippi, Jerusalem, Thyratyra, etc. We can today recognize the church of Christ in various communities, not merely by its name, but MORE IMPORATANTLY by its practice (i.e. behavior – 1 Timothy 3:14 – 15) of doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

1. What is the name God's PEOPLE wear? Give the three passages within the New Testament where we find this name. Is it ever used as an adjective in describing things including the church?

