

The Church 4

Organization

Matt 16:18

1

18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

This is now our fourth lesson on...

2

"What Defines a Church of Christ"

In our first lesson we established that as there is but one God, one Christ, there is also but one Church, **Eph 4**. That said we talked about the fact that since there is only one it just makes common sense to be a part of that one. We noted that there are some 1500 different religions out there today and they can't all be the right one, the one Christ said he would build. S which one is the right one? We looked at how someone gets added to the right Church in **Acts 2:47**, how that when someone comes to God through Christ in faithful obedience, they are saved from their sins and The Lord adds them to the Church. The saved make up the Church, the one right Church. Since it makes just plain common sense then to be a part of the right one, it also just makes common senses to know how to identify the one right one. That's the point of these discussions. In the second lesson of this series we talked about what the Lord authorizes for the use of the contribution. We saw in **1 Cor. 16** how that the disciples gathered together on the first day of the week to lay by in store. That means to give. We discussed the commandment that God gives that the needy of the local congregation are to be cared for. We noted that that care was always given directly to the needy from the congregation and never do we see authorization for or example of funds being sent from a local congregation to an outside organization to fulfill the responsibility of the congregation, such as a benevolent society. We spoke about how that we see authority to pay those who are doing the work of preaching. The conclusion then is that if there is a group out there, regardless of the name they call themselves, that uses the contribution for anything other than that which the Lord has authorized, that group does not fit the pattern seen in the scriptures for the one right Church that Christ built. That is not being narrow minded or legalistic or even arrogant, it is rightly applying the truth of God's Word that we might be found approved. Remember what Christ said in...

Matt 15:13

3

13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.

The goal, our goal, as faithful obedient Christians should be to follow every detail of the Word, not veering either left or right, because that's what God authorizes. The work that a congregation engages in must be authorized or it should not be engaged in it, and we should not be a part of it.

In our last lesson we talked about the organization of the Church and introduced the concept of the...

4

- A) Church Collective or Universal
- B) Church Local

We saw that there is an organization for the Church Universal, Christ is its head...

Eph 5:23

5

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

The scriptures firmly establish the fact that the Church that Jesus built was *HIS* church, and He is its head and ruler. He is its

6

Absolute Ruler

Eph 1:18-23

7

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The Church is not subject to the authority of the land except where the laws of the land don't contradict the Law of God. For instance the Church has to be in compliance with handicap laws. Those Laws don't violate God's. But if, or when, the laws of the land try to dictate what can or can't be taught, then there will be a problem. Christ is the only head of the Church Universal. There is no other organization for the Church Universal, that is it. But we also noted that the Church Local does have an organization for it that The Lord has put into place.

We talked about the membership of that Church and how that each member brings with them a talent or ability to use in their service to the Lord. We looked at the organization that The Lord instituted in the Local Church...

Eph 4:11

8

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

In the local congregation of the Lord's Church He has placed Elders into a position of authority. So exactly what authority do Elders have in the Church? Peter gives a pretty good summary of it in...

1 Peter 5:1-3

9

1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

No man has any authority in the Lord's Church to dictate doctrine or enact law or change law...

Rev 22:18-19

10

18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

The Elders don't dictate, enact, or change God's Law. They are to abide by it, just like all members, and shepherd the congregation among them by the way they lead their lives, by their example. In His instruction to the Church at Corinth in 1 Cor. 5, the Lord doesn't single out the Elders and tell them that their sin was in condoning what the man had done, he speaks to the whole congregation.

1 Cor 5:1-2

11

1 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. **2** You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.

He doesn't single out the Elders in His instruction to discipline the man...

1 Cor 5:6-7

12

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? **7** Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.

The instruction is to the whole congregation to clean out the old leaven so that the whole is influenced by it.

Elders authority, as given by the Lord is to Shepherd the flock that is among them, to lead the congregation according to the Lord's Word. The point is that no man has been given any authority by the Lord to enact law. The conclusion being that if any group of people claiming to be the true Church established by Christ has an organization that is not what is seen in the scriptures then that group cannot be the one true Church.

The Lord's Church, a true Church of Christ, is founded upon the fact the Jesus is the Son of God. It follows His Word in all that it does, not only in the keeping of His commandments, but in how it keeps His commandments, and it is organized the way the Lord has instructed it to be. The Lord's true Church is defined by all of these things, and it is defined by what it does in its worship to God.

The elements of worship are just as important in the defining of a Church as is its organization and how it performs the work given to it by the Lord. What we see when we look into the scriptures of how the New Testament Church worshipped God is...

13

1) Taking the Lord's Supper

Acts 20:7

14

7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

We also see here the New Testament Church engaging...

15

2) Teaching / Preaching

There are three ways that we find authority form the scriptures...

16

A) Direct Command

B) Approved Example

C) Necessary inference

Acts 20:7 is an example of authority by approved example. The disciples gathered together for the purpose of taking the Lord's supper and listening to the preaching of Paul. In...

Col 3:16

17

16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

And in...

Eph 5:18-19

18

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, **19** speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

Here we see examples of direct commandments. It is obviously clear that a true Church of Christ is commanded to sing. This causes an issue for many. They read these commandments and say, well God doesn't say that we can't use musical instruments. That is right, He doesn't. But let's explore this thought for a moment. Is the fact that God doesn't expressly tell His followers that they can't do something give them authority to do it? That's the argument, sounds awful silly doesn't it. Mom and Dad didn't say I couldn't go to that booze party, so that must mean they think it's OK to go. Seriously???

That is about as foolish an argument that can be made. In...

Lev 16:12

19

12 "He shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil.

The Lord commands that the fire to be used for the burning of the incense was to be taken from the altar. Then in...

Num 3:4

20

4 But Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord when they offered strange fire before the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai;

Here is your challenge, where, in the scriptures, can it be found that God commanded that no other fire than what He specified can be used? That commandment cannot be found because it isn't there, it doesn't need to be, because God already said what to use. The specifics of that commandment exclude anything else. God commands His followers to sing, the specifics of that command exclude any and everything else. Such is the nature of God's commandments that is seen repeatedly throughout both the Old and New Testaments. To question whether or not God meant to sing only is to question God.

That is why a true Church of Christ...

21

3) Sing

The following are some excerpts from the writings of early century historians...

22

"Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize."

(Thomas Aquinas, Bingham's Antiquities, Vol. 3, page 137, circa 1250)

23

"Musical instruments were not used. The pipe, tabret, and harp here associate so intimately with the sensual heathen cults, as well as with the wild revelries and shameless performances of the degenerate theater and circus, it is easy to understand the prejudices against their use in the worship."

Augustine 354 A.D., describing the singing at Alexandria under Athanasius

24 *"Leave the pipe to the shepherd, the flute to the men who are in fear of gods and intent on their idol worshipping. Such musical instruments must be excluded from our wingless feasts, for they are more suited for beasts and for the class of men that is least capable of reason than for men.*
Clement of Alexandria, 190AD The instructor, Fathers of the church, p. 130

Musical instruments did not become a factor in so-called worship until about the 10th to 12th centuries when the organ began to be introduced into Catholic worship services.

As we continue on we see in...

Acts 12:12

25

12 And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

While this is probably not a formal worship service, it does illustrate the principal of how important prayer was in the early Church. Then in **1 Cor. 11** the Lord gives specific instruction in how to pray. All prayer is to be through Christ and Christ only. When a woman prays she is not to pray through a man, any man, but only through Christ.

So our 4th element in the Worship service is...

26

4) Prayer

This brings us to the last element we see in the New Testament Church...

27

5) Giving

In...

1 Cor 16:2

28

2 On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.

Here we see the exact same wording as is used in Acts 20:7 concerning the taking of the Lord's Supper. Giving is as much of a commandment as are the other elements of the worship service. Sometimes a discussion is raised on the fact that giving is seen to be a voluntary part of the worship. It is, without question, but why should that make it not a commandment? Singing is a voluntary act of the Christian's service to God, but it is still a commandment. If someone chooses to not participate in the giving, or singing, or prayer, or listening to God's Word being proclaimed, that is their voluntary choice. That doesn't make it any less wrong, mind you, but it is their choice. It is interesting though, that no one ever chooses to not take the Lord's Supper, food for thought.

So, in the New Testament Church we see 5 elements of the Worship being either commanded or seen in example...

29

1) Lord's Supper

Acts 20:7

30

2) Preaching

Acts 20:7

31

3) Singing

Col 3:16

32

4) Prayer

Acts 12:12

33

5) Giving

1 Cor 16:2

These are the elements of the worship service, if any group eliminates any one of these, or if they add to the worship service anything other, say a concert, for example, they do not fit the pattern of the New Testament Church.

You be the judge, because ultimately it is your choice.