

THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE: EXAMINING THE FIRST CHURCH

WHY DOES EXAMINING THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE, THE FIRST CHURCH, MATTER?

- One wishing to please His God in obedience must be willing to submit to GOD'S COMMANDS (Romans 16:26; Philippians 2:12); submitting to God's commands requires rejecting commands which are not His but which have originated from man (Matthew 15:3,9; Titus 1:14; Colossians 2:20-22; Isaiah 29:13; cf. Jeremiah 10:23)
 - Anything which has not originated from God must be rejected (Galatians 1:6-12)
 - "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:16-18)
- If God demands obedience, as it is evident that He does, then one obeying must see if there is a place wherein the obedient are located—there is! God adds the obedient to the church today just as He added the obedient to the church in the first century (Acts 2:47; 5:14; 11:24)
 - Why would God not do the same thing today that He did when the church was established?
 - Why would God add ones who were not obedient to that church; likewise, why would God add those who were obedient to any other church?

WHAT IS A CHURCH?

- A church is not a literal building made of brick, wood, or any other such substance; it is a SPIRITUAL BUILDING—God's building (I Corinthians 3:9-11)—made of living stones (I Peter 2:5) which are built upon a foundation with Christ being the cornerstone (Acts 4:11; Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 2:20-22)
- Church buildings are not holy; Christians are (I Corinthians 6:11)



WHAT DOES "CHURCH" MEAN?

- The English word "CHURCH" comes from a compound Greek word which means "called out"
- This is exemplified in I Peter 2:9 and

HOW MANY CHURCHES WERE THERE IN THE FIRST CENTURY?

- Certainly there were numerous churches congregation-wise (Galatians 1:2; Revelation 1:11; et al); however, there was but one church: That which was composed of all faithful Christians (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:6,10; 5:25-27; Colossians 1:18; 3:15; I Corinthians 10:17; 12:12; Romans 12:5; Galatians 3:26-28; I Timothy 3:5,15)

WAS THE FIRST CHURCH A DENOMINATION?

- No! The concept called "DENOMINATION" both implies and indeed requires division
 - The word means "to name"; something named is thereby differentiated from anything not so named (for example, when two people have a child, the child is shown as distinct by having its own name—even if that name be "Junior"; for another example, when a biologist discovers an organism never before observed, he will give it a two-word name to show its distinction)
 - The implicit division is seen in the mathematical function of a fraction's representing the division of numerator (top number) by denominator (bottom number)
- Jesus prayed for the unity of His disciples, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us:" (John 17:21)
- Paul asked the Corinthians who were trying to denominate into groups following Paul, Apollos, Peter, or Christ, "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (I Corinthians 1:12-13)
- Paul also urged the Ephesians to "... walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:1-6)

THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE

- “Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” (II Timothy 1:9)
- “And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:” (Ephesians 3:9-11)

PROPHECIES ABOUT THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

- “And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (II Samuel 7:16)
- “And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2-3; cf. Joel 2:28-32)
- “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Daniel 2:44)
- “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14)

PREPARATION FOR THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

- “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,” (Galatians 4:4)
- “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Matthew 3:1-3)
- “He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And 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” (Matthew 16:15-19)
- “And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1)

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

- Prophecy was fulfilled when on the day of Pentecost, around A.D. 29, the events prophesied in Isaiah 2:2-3; Daniel 2:44; and Joel 2:28-32 took place in the right place (Jerusalem) at the right time (in the days of Rome) and in the right manner (with the Holy Ghost’s presence)—see Acts 2

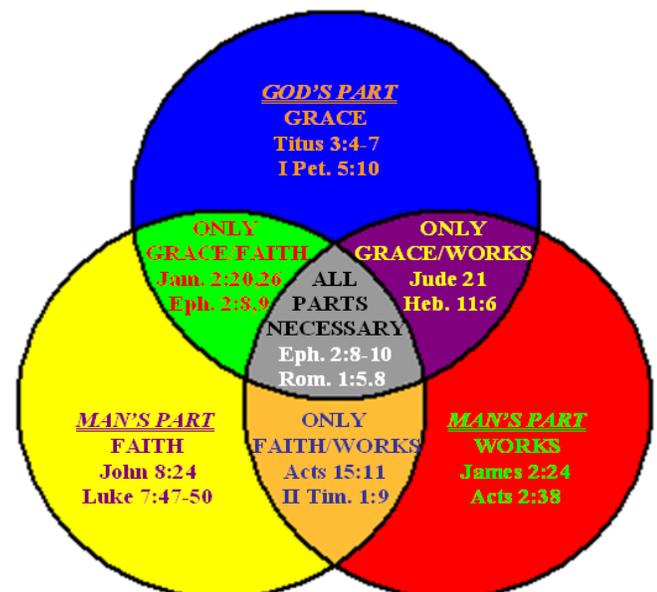
DID THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE USE A CREED?

- Religious groups have many CREEDS (e.g., *Apostle’s Creed, Nicene Creed, Luther’s Catechism, Book of Discipline, Hiscox’ Standard Manual, The Book of Mormon*, etc.)
- Their only creed was the INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (Revelation 22:18-19; cf. Deuteronomy 4:2): the BIBLE, albeit in earthen vessels at that time (II Corinthians 4:7; I Corinthians 13:10)—if that were all they had and it was sufficient (II Peter 1:3), why would anyone want or need anything else? Simply, **other creeds represent man’s desire to dictate for his God** (Matthew 15:9; Titus 1:14; Galatians 1:6-9)

WHO POPULATED THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

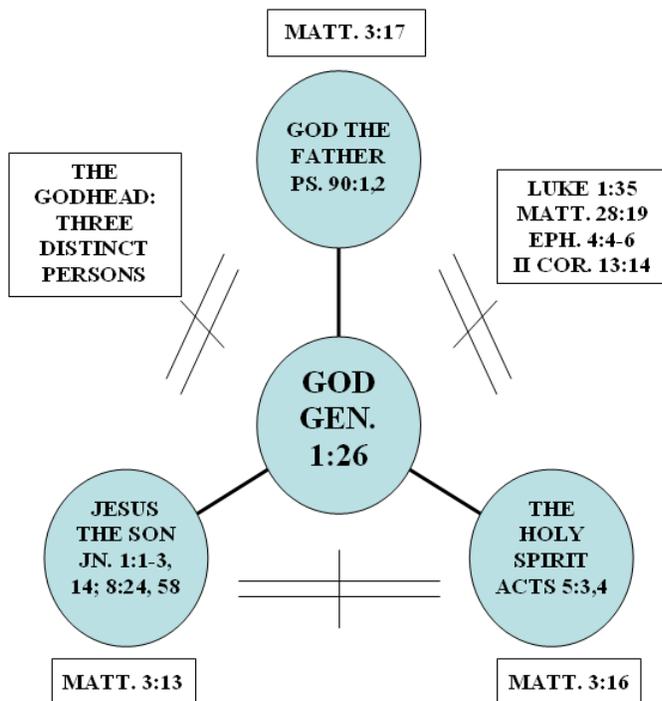
- People were not born into the church physically nor voted in, etc.; rather, “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved [the baptized-DFC]” (Acts 2:47, cf. 38,41)

GOD’S AND MAN’S PARTS IN SALVATION IN THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE?



THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE'S VIEW OF THE GODHEAD



WAS THERE A SET TIME, LENGTH, OR ORDER OF WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE?

- No given length of time or particular hour for worship is set forth as a standard for worship service length; in fact, the only regulation time-wise was the authorization of the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK for worship (Acts 20:7; cf. I Corinthians 16:2)
- What is known is that the early church gathered more often than the once a week time set apart for worship (Acts 2:47); however, the Sunday worship service was the time when all five acts of worship were to be observed
 - PRAYER allowed man to talk to his God (I Corinthians 14:15; James 5:16)
 - SINGING allowed man to praise his God, edify his brethren, and instruct any who had not yet obeyed the Gospel (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; I Corinthians 14:15)
 - BIBLE study allowed man to learn what God's Will involved (Acts 20:7; II Timothy 4:2)
 - The LORD'S SUPPER allowed man to be in communion with his Lord (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 10:16; 11:26)
 - CONTRIBUTION allowed man to help bear others burdens financially (I Corinthians 16:1-2; II Corinthians 9:6-8)

WHO LED THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE?

- The HEAD of the church of the Bible was, and still is, Jesus
 - There is no physical headquarters as there is no physical kingdom (John 18:36); neither is there a mortal man who serves as the head
 - Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23
- In local congregations, ELDERS (also called shepherds, bishops, overseers) are the authority seeing to the care of the flock (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-3; Hebrews 13:17)
 - It should be noted that not all congregations will have elders, for some may not have enough men who are qualified to serve in that position (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9)
 - Except in cases when a particular elder is named, elders are always recognized as being a plurality of males
 - The elders have no authority to overrule in an area in which God has already ruled through His word
- PREACHERS are men to whom the elders look as ones who have the ability and desire to preach—the preacher has no authority over the elders
- DEACONS (I Timothy 3:8-13) are servants under the elders; they hold no authoritative position and are not “junior elders”
- While WOMEN may serve in certain areas (e.g., teaching other WOMEN as in Titus 2:3-5), they may not take a leadership role in the local congregation (I Timothy 2:8-15)

THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

- John 4:24 instructed regarding worship, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth,” what does that mean?
 - “In SPIRIT” indicated that the proper attitude should have accompanied worship (I Corinthians 14:15; cf. Matthew 5:23-24; I Corinthians 11:27-29)
 - “In TRUTH” indicated that the proper actions had to take place in worship; that is, worship had to be doctrinally sound (Hebrews 10:25 shows the necessity of worshipping in the first place; Deuteronomy 12:32 gives an Old Testament *principle* still applicable as does Leviticus 10:1-2 in the example of Nadab and Abihu)

DID THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE USE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC?

- The early church did not use mechanical musical instruments as they sang; rather they sang and created melody on the instrument which was the heart (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)

THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

WHAT WAS THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE CALLED?

- The HOUSE OF GOD (I Timothy 3:15), the FAMILY (Ephesians 3:15), the BODY (Colossians 1:18), the TEMPLE OF GOD (I Corinthians 3:16-17), the CHURCH OF GOD (Acts 20:28), the CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN (Hebrews 12:23), the CHURCHES OF CHRIST (Romans 16:16), the KINGDOM OF GOD (Luke 22:16-18); and the KINGDOM OF HIS DEAR SON (Colossians 1:13), et al
- Does this mean every church given any of these names is the church of the Bible? No, because the identifying characteristics of the church of the Bible are as important as the name itself!

WHAT WAS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE?

- EVANGELISM
 - Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; John 15:8; Acts 8:3-5; 20:20; I Peter 3:15; James 5:20; II Timothy 2:15; cf. Proverbs 11:30
- BENEVOLENCE
 - James 1:27; Galatians 6:2,10; I John 3:17-19; I Peter 4:8-10; I Timothy 6:18
- EDIFICATION
 - Acts 2:46; Ephesians 4:11-12,16,29; Romans 14:19; 15:2; II Corinthians 12:19; Psalm 31:23-24; I Thessalonians 5:11; Proverbs 25:11-13; Colossians 1:10-11

IF UNITY WERE THE OBJECT OF JESUS' PRAYER (JOHN 17), AND IF "THE EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILETH MUCH" (JAMES 5:16), THEN CAN AND SHOULD THERE NOT BE UNITY TODAY IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD?

- The religious world COULD BE UNITED but like Jerusalem many do not desire to be (Matthew 23:37; cf. Proverbs 1:24-31), for they could only be united with each other and God THROUGH HIS WORD!
- Those who are truly obedient to the Word of God are united with God and each other, for He is not the author of confusion (I Corinthians 14:33) or division (I Corinthians 1:13), but of unity (Hebrews 13:20-21)—any not obeying are neither united with God nor His church!

DOES THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE EXIST TODAY?

- If a religious body ...
 - ... is wholly submitting to the commands of God, ...
 - ... rejects every doctrine which originates with men, ...
 - ... is the spiritual building of God, ...
 - ... is composed of those who are holy, ...
 - ... is called out from the world, ...
 - ... is distinct from all man-made institutions, ...
 - ... is not divided, but endeavors "to keep the unity of the spirit," ...
 - ... is that one eternally purposed, ...
 - ... is the one of which the Old Testament prophesied, ...
 - ... is the one which John and Jesus promised, ...
 - ... is the one established on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem in the days of the Roman Empire, ...
 - ... uses no creed but God's inspired Word, ...
 - ... is the one to which God adds "such as should be saved," ...
 - ... is the one which recognizes God's role (grace) and man's roles (faith and works) as being equally necessary for salvation, ...
 - ... recognizes the authority of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, ...
 - ... worships in the right manner—in spirit and in truth, ...
 - ... is organized Scripturally with Christ as the Head, ...
 - ... wears a Scriptural name, ...
 - ... reaches out to the lost with the Gospel, ...
 - ... is concerned with meeting the physical needs of all men, ...
 - ... is concerned with spiritually strengthening her members, ...
 - ... and is the church of Jesus' choice which He purchased, ...
- ... then IT IS THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE!

CAN I "ATTEND THE CHURCH OF [MY] CHOICE THIS SUNDAY"?

- Often one driving will see a bumper sticker or sign of some kind which states the above thought; sincere as the one behind the placing of that sticker or sign may have been, that one has missed what is most important!
- Man's choice does not matter (Jeremiah 10:23; Isaiah 55:8-9); one must attend THE CHURCH OF JESUS' CHOICE
 - The church of Jesus' choice is THE ONE WHICH HE PURCHASED with His blood! (Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23; Revelation 5:9; cf. Colossians 1:13-14; Hebrews 9:12-14; I Peter 1:18-21; Ephesians 1:7; Revelation 1:5)

CATES PUBLICATIONS

- Check out "Overview of Christian Evidences" #s 1 and 2 and "Bible Introduction" #s 1-6
- Available or coming: Charts on Morality, Religious Error, Types & Antitypes, NT Greek, and others
- All charts are comprised of sound, Bible-based material which is perfect for serious and casual Bible students alike; these charts make great gifts and incentives
- Visit on-line to order books, tracts, and the mentioned and other charts (shop.catespublications.com)