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(Only churches and individuals receiving bundles are listed)

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GEORGIA

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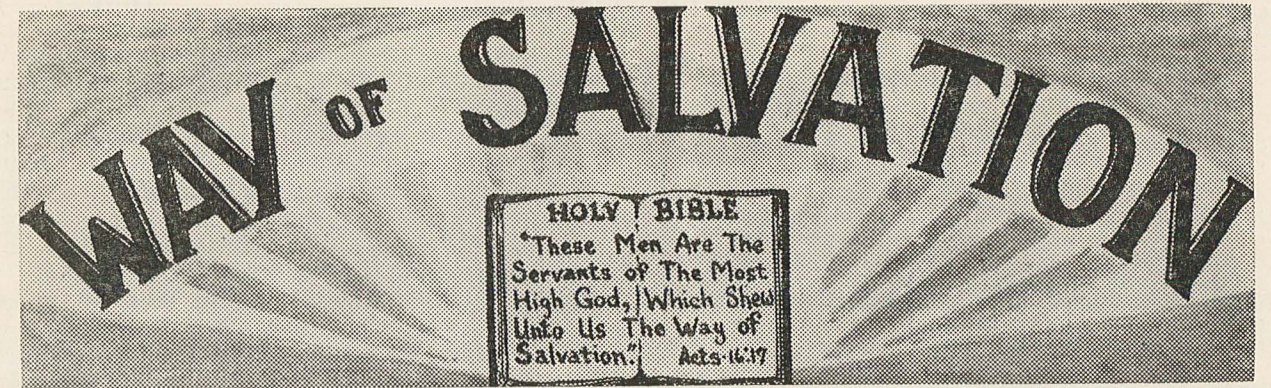
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Volume 3

PENSACOLA, FLORIDA — AUGUST 1955

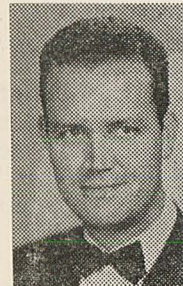
No. 2

THE CHURCH IN PROPHECY

By E. V. SRYGLEY, JR.

Five Stages

The New Testament church has existed in five distinct stages of development: in purpose; in promise; in prophecy; in preparation; and in perfection. In this article the reader is asked to consider the church as the prophets saw it.



Distinct Features

Many, if not all, of the fundamental marks of the New Testament church are subjects of Old Testament prophecy. In this article the author proposes to look through the eye of prophecy at some of these basic church truths.

The Law

The law or constitution of the church is a matter of Old Testament prophecy. The prophets saw a new law different from the law of Moses in nature, extent, and power. Jer. 31:33 foresees a new, spiritual law in contrast to the law of Moses which regulated only the outward act. Compare in this connection Matt. 5:21-28, and II Cor. 3:1-3. Isaiah looked ahead to a new law that was to be universal. That was in contrast to the law of Moses which was a limited covenant, Deut. 5:2-3.

Jer. 31:34 sees a new law which gives something the law of Moses could not give: complete remission of sins.

The Head

The Head of the church is a subject of Old Testament prophecy. In this regard, two outstanding truths appear: first, the rebuilding of the "tabernacle of David" which was fulfilled in the establishment of the church or kingdom, and, second, the salvation of the Gentiles as a people through Christ as the Head of a new institution.

Isa. 9:6-7 reveals Christ on the throne of David. We will see from another prophecy that this throne is a spiritual one; not an earthly, millennial throne.

Isa. 11:10 pictures a root of Jesse whom the Gentiles would seek. In Rom. 15:8-12 Paul applies

this prophecy to the reign of Christ over the Gentiles, thus affording the Gentiles salvation.

Amos 9:11-12 prophesies a rebuilding of the tabernacle of David which would benefit the Gentiles. Acts 15:13-18 applies this prophecy to the church and to the admission of the Gentiles into the church.

The Time

The prophets saw the time of the building of the church. Isaiah knew that the "mountain" of God's house would be built in the "last days," Isa. 2:2. Heb. 1:2 teaches that the last days had begun in apostolic times.

Joel saw a future pouring out of God's Spirit and a consequent, universal salvation, Joel 2:28-32. In Acts 2:16-21 Peter applies this prophecy to the events connected with the establishment of the church.

Dan. 2:44 sees the church or kingdom established in the days of the Roman empire. In Dan. 7:13-14 the Son of man is pictured ascending in a cloud to God to receive a kingdom. This is almost a word for word revelation of the ascension of Christ recorded in Acts 1:9-11.

The Place

The place of the building of the church was not hid from the prophets. Isaiah said the word of the new institution would originate in Jerusalem, Isa. 2:3. Jesus said the same thing in Luke 24:46-47.

Joel said there would be deliverance in Jerusalem, Joel 2:32. This context in Joel is applied to the establishment of the church, Acts 2:16-21.

Manner of Entrance

Isa. 54:13 and Jer. 31:34 teach that under the new covenant all God's children are taught of Him. Hence, these prophets knew that teaching precedes entrance into the family of God produced by the new law. Jesus alludes to these and similar prophecies in John 6:44-45.

Extent

The prophets knew that the law of Moses embraced only the Israelites, but they saw a new relationship that would include both Jews and Gentiles, or all the world. The "all nations" of Isa. 2:2 refers primarily to both Jews and Gentiles. Hence, Isaiah knew that both Jews and Gentiles would be members of God's family under the new covenant.

(Continued on Page Two)

Way of Salvation

Published Monthly at 1213 East Jordan Street
Pensacola, Florida

PERVIE NICHOLS — Editor and Publisher

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Single subscriptions, \$1.25 per year in advance; in clubs of ten or more, \$1.00 per year in advance; 50 copies to one address, \$2.00; 100 copies to one address, \$3.75; 1,000 copies to one address, \$35.00. (Full front or back page advertisement free with order of 1,000 copies). Above rates apply only to residents of the United States.

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The Birthday of the Church

The question relative to the birthday of the church or kingdom of Christ is one of the live issues among religious people today. Some teach that the church of Christ began soon after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. Others affirm



that the church was founded by John the Baptist. Many people contend that Jesus built the church during His personal ministry. Then there are those who teach that the kingdom began in A.D. 1914. Some denominations, while admitting that the church has already been built, deny that the kingdom has been established. In this they make a distinction between the church and kingdom, thus making the birthday of the kingdom still in the future.

Church and Kingdom Same

When Jesus used the terms "my church," "the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:18-19), and "my kingdom" (Jn. 18:36), He referred to one and the same institution. The Lord's Supper was to be eaten by those in Christ's kingdom (Matt.

THE CHURCH IN PROPHECY (Continued from Page One)

The "stone" of Dan. 2:34, representing Christ's kingdom, "filled the worth earth." Dan. 7:14 pictures Christ reigning over "all people, nations, and languages." These prophecies should be compared with such New Testament passages as Matt. 28:18-20, and Eph. 2:11-22.

Duration

According to Dan. 2:44 and Dan. 7:14 the kingdom of Christ is to last forever. Paul expresses this same truth in Eph. 3:21.

When Jesus comes again, the church will be given up to God: time will end; judgment will be passed; and the faithful of the church will continue their existence in the everlasting kingdom of heaven, I Cor. 15:23-28.

26:28-30; Lk. 22:28-30). But "the church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Cor. 2:2) was in the habit of eating the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11). Therefore, members of the church in Corinth were citizens in the Lord's kingdom. Paul was a member of the church, which is the body of Christ (Eph. 5:30; Col. 1:18). But he was also in the kingdom (Col. 1:13). Hence, to be in the church is to be in the kingdom. God set the Apostles in the church (1 Cor. 12:28). John was an apostle, hence, was in the church. But he said he was in the kingdom (Rev. 1:9). These facts prove conclusively that the church and kingdom of Christ are the same institution. To make a distinction is to pervert the Word of God.

Not Built Before the Cross

Before the cross John the Baptist preached that the kingdom was "at hand" (Matt. 3:1-2). Jesus said that it was "at hand" (Matt. 4:17; Mk. 1). Christ sent out the twelve (Matt. 10:4-7) and the seventy (Lk. 10:9-11) to preach that the kingdom "is come nigh," "is at hand." "At hand" means nearby, in the immediate future (2 Tim. 4:6). Hence, the church or kingdom was only "at hand" before the cross (Mk. 9:1; Lk. 12:32, 23:14; Mk. 15:43). This being true, the church could not have been built during the lifetime of John the Baptist. In Matt. 14 we read of the death of John. Then several months after John's death Jesus spoke of the church in future tense when he said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). This is positive proof that John did not build the church.

Birthday of the Church

Jesus promised His Apostles the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth and bring to their remembrance all things He had taught them (Jn. 14:16-26; 16:13). They were to receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8-R.V.). The kingdom was to be established when the power came. "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" (Mk. 9:1). Just before he ascended He said to His apostles, "But ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). He then instructed them to "tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (Lk. 24:46-49). Following the Lord's ascension the Apostles went to Jerusalem, and on the day of Pentecost received the Holy Spirit and "power from on high" (Acts 2:1-4). Now since the kingdom was to come "WITH" the power, we must conclude that the church or kingdom was established at that time in A.D. 33.

Some in the Church

During the first century thousands became members of the church. On the day of its beginning about three thousand were added to it, and the Lord added to it daily (Acts 2:41-47).

(Continued on Page Three)

SERMON OUTLINE

By SAM BINKLEY

Jesus, The Soul Winner (1 Peter 2:21)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Jesus left us the perfect example.
2. If we follow Him we will not go wrong.
3. Jesus was not successful in converting everyone (Matt. 13:15).

DISCUSSION:

I. HE KEPT HIS MIND ON HIS WORK.

(a) This principle applies in our everyday lives.

(b) His work was to save souls (Matt. 1:21; 1 Tim. 1:15).

1. He came to do God's will (John 6:38).
2. In keeping his mind on His work He always had the right answer for every situation.

II. HE LIVED ABOVE SIN.

(a) He was tempted in all points as we are (Heb. 4:15).

1. He knew how to overcome temptations. (Matt. 4:1-11).

2. Pilate could find no fault in Him. (Matt. 27:23).

(b) Application for us.

1. The Lord will not suffer His children to be tempted above that which they are able to bear. (1 Jn. 3:8-9; 1 Cor. 10:13).

2. We cannot expect to win souls for Christ while living for the devil. (Matt. 5:16).

III. HE VISITED THE LOWER CLASS.

(a) Jesus sent word to John that the poor have the Gospel preached unto them (Matt. 11:5).

1. Abraham Lincoln: "The Lord must have loved the common people, He made so many of them."

2. Poor are more receptive to the Gospel than the rich.

(b) We must preach to all (Mark 16:15-16).

IV. HE WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED.

(a) He realized the value of a soul (Mark 8:36).

1. Spend a lifetime and convert one soul, our time will not be spent in vain.

2. Some have not learned real value of a soul.

(b) His deep concern is shown by:

1. His patience in teaching them (Matt. 13).

2. His ability to recognize their motives.

(a) "By what authority" (Matt. 21:23-27).

(b) Zachaeus desired to learn from the Lord. (Luke 19:1-10).

3. His courage to rebuke them in their sin. (Matt. 15:1-13; Matt. 23).

4. His prayer for their salvation (Matt. 23:37, Luke 23:34).

V. HE WAS DETERMINED.

(a) He was never willing to give up.

1. As long as He lived He tried to get people to accept God's plan and be saved.

2. He lost His life because of His faithfulness to His Father.

(b) He finished the work God gave Him to do on the earth (John 17:54; 19:30).

News Bits

The increased number of new and renewal subscriptions being received indicates that many are taking advantage of the special offer stated in the July issue. This offer is extended through the month of August. Dear reader, if you have not done so, won't you please send us a club of subscriptions right away? The special price is: 80c each in clubs of ten or more. Single subscriptions \$1.00 each. If your subscription has expired, or will soon do so, please take advantage of this special offer and renew this month.

—o—

The editor wishes to take this means to thank all who have written and commended both the appearance and contents of this paper, as well as its strict policy. Your words of encouragement mean a lot to us. Our purpose is to keep it free from all hurtful hobbies and wranglings among brethren, doctrinally sound and worthy of the consideration and assistance of all.

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ADDED FEATURE — Because of the fact that there are a number of young preachers and Bible class teachers who read this paper we thought that it would be an additional service to print an outline of some Bible theme each month so as to aid anyone in preparing a talk or Bible class, or for use in private study. We solicit outline material from all gospel preachers who wish to share some of their outlines with our readers. If you think this added feature is worthwhile we would like to hear from you.

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Can One Be Saved Outside The Church?

By SAM BINKLEY

—o—

AUTHORITY FOR ANSWER

To answer any Bible question we must first of all recognize the proper source of authority for the answer to that question. Hence when we attempt to answer the question concerning the necessity of membership in the church we must look to the right source for the right answer. Since the Bible is the inspired word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17) surely we can depend upon the answer that we find therein. Therefore we will not give the answer that men might give just because it is the most popular view held by man, but the answer that we find in the inspired word of God.

THE QUESTION DEFINED

The question is not, "Can one be saved out of a denomination?" But, "Can one be saved out of the church of the Lord?" Neither is it a question of whether the church saves or not, but where must one be to enjoy the salvation that is from God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. All who study the Bible know that God Saves. Pardon takes place with God; it is the act of Jehovah and not an act of man. So the question correctly stated is: "Does God save in the church or out of the church?" Let us notice a number of expressions used in the New Testament Scriptures in connection with man's salvation and see the connection each has with the church of the Lord.

SAVED ADDED TO THE CHURCH

The Lord adds every saved person to the church that we read about in the New Testament. On the first Pentecost after the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ the apostles received the power from on high which the Lord promised to them and preached for the first time under the great commission given to them by the Lord. Peter declared to a multitude that they had crucified Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God, but that God had raised him up, and made him both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2) When they heard this they were pricked in their hearts and began to cry out, "Men and brethren what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls . . . And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:37, 38, 41, 47.) Therefore all the saved or all Christians are in the church of the Lord because the Lord adds all the saved to the church.

CHURCH ENROLLED IN HEAVEN

Concerning salvation the Bible teaches, "And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 21:15.) This should certainly impress upon us the importance of having our names enrolled in heaven or written

in the book of life. Let us now read another scriptures which tells us whose names are written in heaven. "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all and to the spirits of just men made perfect." (Heb. 12:22-23.) And Paul wrote of certain of his "fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life." (Phil. 4:3.) Only those who are members of the church of the firstborn have their names enrolled in heaven, hence the necessity of being a member of the church of the Lord to be saved.

SPIRITUAL UNION

Nearly all religious people place a great deal of emphasis upon the importance of one being united with the Lord spiritually in order to be saved, but most of them do not teach the truth of the Bible on his subject. It is generally known that the teaching of practically every protestant denomination is that a person first becomes a Christian and at some later time may join the church of his choice. The teaching is that a person can do the work of a Christian better in the church than out, but, if he wishes, he can be a Christian and be saved without ever becoming a member of the church. In writing to the church at Ephesus, Paul said: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:22, 23.) Again, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." (Col. 1:18.) In these two passages Jesus is declared to be the head over all things to the church, and if we would enjoy the blessings that come from being spiritually united with Christ, we must sustain the same relationship that the members of the fleshly body sustain to the head of the body. Once again we see the necessity of being in the church in order to be saved.

BORN INTO GOD'S FAMILY

Jesus taught Nicodemus that "Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." (John 3:5.) The process of the new birth is that which puts one into the kingdom of God. This also suggests that one is a member of the family of God when he is born again, for such is the way that one becomes a member of a family, to be a member of the family of God is to be a member of the church of God for the family is the church. (1 Tim. 3:15.) Therefore to be in the house (family) of God is to be in the church of God, and to be in the family of God one must be born again, and when he is born he becomes a member of the church of the living God. In all of these expressions where salvation is mentioned, we have a mention of the church in the same connection. Therefore we must conclude that one must be in the church of the Lord in order to be saved.

New Testament Names of the Church

Christians nearly always speak of the church as the church of Christ. If you should ask an average church member to give you the location of the church of God, he would direct you to a meeting place of the Holiness Church. Perhaps modern usage and modern churches have brought about this condition. To many Christians no other name is scriptural except the name church of Christ. I believe we have put too much emphasis upon this name until it has become almost a "trade name" with us. Jesus said: "And I say 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." (Matt. 16:18). Certainly the church belongs to Christ and we speak scripturally when we thus say, as Paul said in writing to the Roman brethren, "The churches of Christ salute you." (Rom. 16:16). He is speaking here in terms of the congregations. If several congregations are churches of Christ, then one congregation would be a church of Christ. Speaking of all congregations

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH (Continued from Page Two)

Paul and the Colossians were in the kingdom (Col. 1:13). To the Ephesians he wrote, "We are members of his body" (Eph. 5:30). The body is the church (Eph. 1:18-22; Col. 1:18). Therefore, Paul and these Ephesians were in the church. Paul addressed a letter to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 2:2). Blessings in the kingdom were being received when Heb. 12:28 was written. About 96 A.D. John declared that he was in the kingdom (Rev. 1:9).

Some Absurd Conclusions

IF the church or kingdom has not yet been established we are forced into the following absurd positions: (1) Those 84 preachers (Jesus included) who taught 1900 years ago that the kingdom was "at hand," or nearby, in the immediate future, were false teachers. (2) The promised power never came upon the Apostles. (3) Some who heard Christ utter the words of Mk. 9:1 are still living. (4) It is useless to urge sinners to be born again (Jn. 3:5), since the new birth puts one into the kingdom, and the kingdom is not in existence. (5) Jesus was a false prophet and the greatest fraud who has ever lived. (6) The Bible is a book of falsehoods. If the kingdom or church is still future these conclusions are unavoidable.

But the Bible is true and Jesus is the Christ, hence, the day of Pentecost in 33 A.D. marks the birthday of the church. Before that date the Bible speaks of it as being in the future, but thereafter inspiration refers to it as being in existence.

Friend, are you a member of a church whose birthday is either before or after the birthdate of the church revealed in the Bible? If so, the church of which you are a member is NOT the church of Christ, the church Jesus built.

collectively, we would say the church or the church of Christ, or perhaps use some of the other Bible names.

The point that I would like to stress is that there are many names given in the Bible to the church, the called out. When Jesus was talking to Peter in Matt. 16, He said: "I will build my church." When Paul had come to Ephesus, we have these words recorded concerning his work there: "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." (Acts. 20:17). Here the church is spoken of as "the church." The same Paul that spoke of God's people as "the church" wrote a letter to the saved in Corinth and addressed it: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth." (1 Cor. 1:2). Now, certainly no student of the Bible would say that the church in Corinth was unlike the church in Ephesus. The church is also called the "church of the living God." Paul, in writing to Timothy, thus states: "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." (1 Tim. 3:14-15).

Besides all of these names, we have the apostle saying: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." (1 Cor. 12:13-14). "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body." (Eph. 1:22-23).

We have, therefore, the following names given to the church: "the churches of Christ," "my church," "the church," "the church of God," "the church of the living God," and "the body of Christ." There are others, such as "the house of God," "the kingdom of God," etc.

These different names depict different phases of the church. To use the name "church of Christ" or "churches of Christ" tells the world that Christ died for it. It is His because He bought it with His blood and built it on the first Pentecost after the resurrection. When the Bible speaks of this body of people as "the church," we get the idea that there is just one. There are not two, neither are there two hundred, but just "the church." The name "church of God" as used several times in the New Testament impresses our minds with the fact that the church originated in the mind of God. As Paul would write: "According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. 3:11). Christ, the gospel, and the church are eternal with God. Many of the early converts were people who had been worshipers of idols. They had worshiped graven images such as were found in the city of Athens. Therefore, it was necessary to impress upon their minds that God is an active, living being. And to this end the apostle writes and calls the church the "church of the living God." (1 Tim. 3:15). Certainly he is not talking about a different church, but is

(Continued on Page Four)

Some Reasons Why the Church Of Christ Is Worth Investigation

By HOWARD A. BLAZER, SR.

I. Because It Has No Creed-Book but the Bible

The inspired Scriptures furnish us to all good works (2 Tim. 3:15-17), "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." This leaves no good work to be furnished by a man-made creed, discipline, manual, etc. Such are additions to God's Word, and to do so will result in the plagues of His Word added to the soul (Rev. 22:18).

II. Because It Speaks Only

Where the Bible Speaks

If we cannot find a "Thou saith the Lord" for what is practical we will not practice it. We are

NEW TESTAMENT NAMES OF CHURCHES (Continued from Page Three)

saying that God is a living, active, life-giving being. The God of the church is able to take dust of the earth and make man and breathe into his nostrils the breath of life and make him becoming a living being. Many of the early Christians were not acquainted with a God of that kind before their conversion.

Many of the denominations infringe upon the New Testament church. A few days ago I attended a wedding in a Presbyterian Church. The preacher, in pronouncing the contracting parties husband and wife, said: "As a minister of the church of Christ." And yet he was a Presbyterian preacher. We have such infringements as "Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America," "Church of Christ, Scientist," and "Spiritual Church of Christ." Adam Clarke refers to the followers of Christ as Christians, but not one time does he refer to them as Methodists.

The word "church," whether used as church of God or churches of Christ, always includes all the saved in whatever territory to which it is applied. There was not one saved person out of the church of God in Corinth, nor was there one saved person out of the church in Ephesus. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord." (Acts 9:31). How many saved people were in the church in these provinces? All that were saved in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria were in the congregations of the church in those three sections.

If all the churches (so called) that are wearing unscriptural names would take from over their doors such names and erect scriptural names, there would not be so much unemployment for the next few weeks. Many carpenters, electricians, etc., would find work. That, however, would not help the churches unless they conformed to the teaching of the Bible in all other points.—*Gilbert E. Shaffer, Gospel Advocate.*

thus commanded (1 Pet. 4:11), "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." To follow what men say in religion is to worship God in vain (Mk. 7:7). Even if an angel should preach another Gospel he is accursed (Gal. 1:8-9). We therefore speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent.

III. Because It Wears the Name of Christ

The whole family of God wears the name of Christ (Eph. 3:15). There is salvation in none other (Ac. 4:12). The Corinthians were condemned for wearing the name of Paul, Appollos, and Peter (I Co. 1:10-15). Everything in religion must be done in the name of Christ (Col. 3:17). The men at Ephesus who were baptized of John the Baptist had no blessings of the Holy Spirit until baptized in the name of Christ (Ac. 19:1-6). Congregations of the Lord's church were called "churches of Christ" (Ro. 16:16). The church of Pergamos was commended because "Thou holdest fast My name" (Rev. 2:13). Surley one can thus see the importance of wearing the name of Christ.

IV. Because It Teaches the Bible Plan Of Pardon for Alien Sinners

The alien sinner is commanded to believe (Ac. 16:31; He. 11:6). Those believers, "Pricked in their hearts," were told to repent (Ac. 2:38). The penitent believer was told to Confess faith in Christ (Ac. 8:37). The command for alien sinners to be baptized is given too many times to be misunderstood. (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15; Ac. 2:38; 8:12, 13, 38; 10:47, 48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16). Baptism puts us into Christ (Gal. 3:27; Ro. 6:3-4). Fulfills all righteousness Mt. 3:15). Doth also now save us (1 Pet. 3:21).

V. Because It Teaches the Bible Plan Of Pardon for the Erring Christian

Simon the Sorcerer was a child of God (Ac. 8:13). He later sinned and was told to repent and pray (Ac. 8:22). James wrote to brethren who erred and told them to confess faults and pray (Jas. 5:16, 19). John told children of God to confess sins (1 Jn. 1:8; 2:1). We see then that an erring Christian must repent, confess sins, and pray. Religions of men tell the alien sinner to do this, but as we have seen, God's law of pardon for the alien sinner does not include Confessing Sins and Prayer.

VI. Because It Observes the Lord's Supper On the First Day of the Week

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper and commanded us to do it (Mt. 26:16; Mk. 14:22; Lk. 22:19). The church at Corinth was commanded to observe it (1 Co. 23-26). The early church continued steadfastly in breaking bread (Ac. 2:42). This steadfast practice was observed on the first day of the week (Ac. 20:7). A church that does not thus observe the Lord's Supper has no spiritual life in it.

How To Find The New Testament Church

GUS NICHOLS

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Those who build and establish local congregations are under the general principle to "Make all things according to the pattern." (Heb. 8:5.) The churches of Christ as pictured in the New Testament are either a pattern by which all congregations now are to be constructed or else man is free to start and build the kind of a church wanted, regardless of the word of the Lord. To identify the true church is to compare the church now thought to be the true church with the church of the New Testament. If they are identical, or the same in all points, then we know that we have the true church of the New Testament in our community. Let us briefly test the matter. Is the church of which you are a member identical with the church of the New Testament? Yes, this includes the church of which I am a member. No one should feel peeved to have the church of which he is a member compared with the church as revealed in the New Testament. In fact every one should desire such comparison, for we search the scriptures primarily to find wherein we may be wrong, rather to prove we are right about something. Any church today which is identical with the New Testament in name, faith, worship, doctrine and practice, is the true church, or else the church mentioned over one hundred times in the New Testament was not the true church.

IDENTICAL IN NAME

The church in the New Testament was called "MY church" by Christ. (Mat. 16:18.) We also read of "The church, which in His body." (Eph. 1:22-23.) Paul said, "The churches of Christ salute you." (Rom. 16:16.) He also speaks of the Churches of God." (1 Cor. 11:16.) More often we read simply of "The church" with no qualifying term connected therewith. (Acts 2:4-7.) Members of the church are simply called "Christian" in the New Testament. (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16.) This was that "Worthy name by which" they were called." (Jas. 2:7.) These are not denominational terms, for the New Testament is not a denominational book. It is in no sense a sectarian book. It rather presents pure, primitive Christianity, as it came fresh from its Founder, the Lord Jesus Christ. Is the church of which you and I are members identical with the church of the New Testament in Name? It avails nothing to make excuses for names not in the scriptures, for we are commanded to, "Speak as the oracles of God." (1 Pet. 4:11.) Such excuses are an admission there is no identity in name.

THE SAME CREED OR RULE OF FAITH

The church of the New Testament was governed by the word of truth, as preached and taught by the inspired writers and teachers mentioned in the New Testament, and not by human creeds. They had in God's revelation "All things that pertain unto life and godliness." (II Pet. 1:3.) They were to "Observe

all things whatsoever" Christ had commanded. (Mat. 28:19-20.) The scriptures are a perfect guide in all religious matters. (II Tim. 3:16-17.) The Commandments of men make for "Vain" worship. (Mat. 15:9.) The church which has such a creed now is not identified with the true church in the New Testament.

SAME IN ORGANIZATION

The New Testament church had a plurality of "Elders in every church" (Acts 14:23; 20:17.) These "elders" were called "Bishops." (Phil 1:1; Titus 1:5-7.) They were the "Overseers of the Church, and it was their duty to "Take the oversight thereof." (I Pet. 5:1-3.) They had the "Rule over" the church, and were to "Rule well." (Heb. 13:7-17; I Tim. 5:17.) The church was to "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." (Heb. 13:17.) The true church also had deacons. (Phil. 1:1.) Is the church of which you are a member identical with the New Testament church in organization. Any effort to justify a different organization is an admission that there is a lack of identity here.

IDENTITY IN WORSHIP

The New Testament church assembled for worship on "The first day of the week." (Acts 20:7.) They "Came together to break bread" —came "Together to eat." (1 Cor. 11:33; Acts 20:7.) They sang spiritual songs. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16.) They prayed (Acts 2:42.) They gave of their means as "prospered." (I Cor. 16:1-2.) They had public teaching. (Acts 11:26; 2:42; 20:7.) These are the items of worship, as practiced by New Testament churches then. To add to this, or leave off any item which they had is to be lacking in identity with the New Testament church.

IDENTITY IN DOCTRINE

The New Testament says. "Teach no other doctrine." (I Tim. 1:3.) It says "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath no God." (II Jn. 9.) They preached Christ. (Acts 8:5, 12.) That he is both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36; Phil. 2:9-11.) They preached and taught that Christ died "For our sins" according to the scriptures. (I Cor. 15:1-2.) They preached the Resurrection of Christ. (I Cor. 15:1-4; Acts 2:22-33.) They preached his authority — that he has all power. (Mat. 28:18.) That he is coming again at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead. (I Cor. 15:20-26; II Tim. 4:1-3.) They demanded faith in order to salvation. (Acts 16:30-32.) They also told believers to, "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:38.) Those who had believed and were penitent, were told to "Arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16; 9:6.) The obedient to the teaching were "Baptized into Jesus Christ." "In whom we have redemption through His blood." (Rom. 6:3; Col. 1:14.) They taught that all such were "Baptized into one body." (I Cor. 12:13.) Hence, all such were by the process of obeying the gospel "Added to the church." (Acts 2:47.) Does the church of which you are a member teach all this now? If not, how can you say you are identical with the New Testament church?