

The Household Of God

In the previous bulletins we looked at "Sin", what it is, the consequences, and redemption from it. We learned from the scriptures (God's Holy inspired word) that God provided a safe and secure location of salvation. God tells us in no uncertain terms where the manifold wisdom of God was to be known (Eph.3:10) "to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly [places] might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God,". Now, if we demand the same "God inspired wisdom" where would we look? Would it not be the same location as the first century people looked? Did the first century Christians have "a" foundation to build their faith on? Listen to what the apostle Paul wrote the Ephesians (2:19-22) "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." It is very important that we understand this scripture. It is in very simple terms telling all who read it that Jesus the Christ is the chief corner stone, and His apostles and prophets were the rest of the foundation for His church. This being the case, there is no room for the doctrines, disciplines, creeds, and theologies of uninspired men in Christ's church. Paul, when he wrote to Titus, new that man would try to pervert the Gospel of Christ (in the name of religion); 1:13 "This testimony is true. For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. " It is imperative that we look at the language Paul used here and remember that he was directed by the Holy Spirit... "For which cause reprove them sharply". Paul understood the consequences of a perverted Gospel. Therefore, the foundation of the church has been laid just as God wanted it; to add, subtract, or modify it in any way from the first century is to reject the very head ship of Christ.

To really understand the first century church, we must first understand who it belongs to. We are not left in the dark as to whom the church belongs, look at Matthew 16:16-18 "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my

Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. " Is this a difficult passage to understand? Are do we need help to misunderstand it? Jesus stated plainly and simply that, Jesus was going to build His church. The church we read about in God's Word is Christ church.

Therefore, it is the church of Christ. If one needs reassurance of this fact, look at Col. 1:18--"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". But what was it called in the first century one might ask? Paul when writing to the Roman brethren said; "Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ salute you." (Rom.16:16). Beloved, if there is still doubt in your mind as to whom the church belongs to look at Acts 20:28--"Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." Can we not see that God's Word is clear as to the head ship of the church and by the name that it was known by.

Yes, I am aware of the over 2,000 denominations of this world, you see I was one of them. Then I married a very devoted Christian Lady who followed the pattern set forth in God's Word (1Pet. 3:1--"In like manner, ye wives, [be] in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives;). Allow me to draw from my limited experiences, with a finite mind and make an observation. If I were to buy a mechanical device that was made in 1932 that required a dime to operate it and I placed 1940 dime in the slot, would it not work? What if I used a 1950, 1960, or a 1990 dime, would it still work? Of course it would! Why? Because all of them are within the guidelines of the designers specification to make it work. Now, what would happen if I had a nickel would it work? What about a quarter, or fifty cent piece, No of course not! Why? They don't meet the manufactures pattern. Why is it, that we can understand these principles so clearly and can not make the same kind of application to God's Word? My beloved listen to Paul as he directs Timothy (2Tim.1:13) "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Paul is telling Timothy to follow the pattern.

The church of Christ is content with Jesus being the only head. It has no earthly headquarters (Acts 2:33--"Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear."). Jesus is the head of the body, the church.

The Bible pattern identifies the church NOT as bricks and mortar edifice but --"ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"(1Pet.2:5). All Jesus' apostles were members of His body, the church. What about today? Yes, today we can follow the same pattern as our Corinthian brethren did 1 Cor. 12:27--"Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof." and when we follow this pattern then God will add you to His church--Acts 2:47 "praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved." Jesus came into this world, not only as Savior but also as Lord of men. Listen to what He told His apostles--"18 And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: 20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt.28:18-20).

In order for man to be in the Lord's church he must submit to the Lord's pattern, thus to the authority of Christ. Beloved, this is where all of us need to be, in the blood bought body of Christ.

Next week we will look at how the first century people were added to the Lord's church. **LET US ALL FOLLOW GOD'S PATTERN!**