

The New Testament Church: The Church We Read About in the Bible

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Texts: Acts 2:36-47, 4:23-35
- B. The African-American author, Alex Haley (1921-1991) wrote the well-known work "Roots" (1976). It was a semi-fictional account of the search for his historical origins. It began many folks' search for their own roots.
- C. Most denominations can trace their own origins to a man or a cause.
 - 1. Catholic Church - historically recognized as a denomination around the 325 AD Council of Nicea
 - 2. Lutheranism - A reform minded Catholic priest named Martin Luther in 1530 sought to reform the Catholic Church.
 - 3. Presbyterianism - John Calvin, Ulrich Swingli, et al, 1540; eventually took root in Scotland.
 - 4. Baptists - John Smythe, John Menno Simmons, et al, circa 1611.
 - 5. Methodism - John and Charles Wesley in colonial America, 1735, as a search for structure in Protestantism.
 - 6. Episcopalians - an American attempt to reform the Anglican Church of England in 1750.
 - 7. Christian Church - A departure from the restoration movement begun in Bethany, WV during the early 1800s, led by Isaac Errett et al, over the instrument and missionary society, crystallized in 1896 at the Sand Creek Conference.
 - 8. Jehovah's Witness - grew out of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society started by Charles Tayes Russell in 1880.
 - 9. Pentecostal and Charismatic churches - The Second Great Advent Movement, circa 1890.
 - 10. Digressive churches of Christ - 1930-1940; World Radio Program and the Herald of Truth, et al.
- D. Can one trace the roots of the church of Christ in the New Testament?

I. ORIGIN - Acts 2:36-47

- A. The Promised Kingdom - Matt. 16:18-19
 - 1. In Acts 2, Peter was using the keys of the Kingdom.
 - 2. What constitutes a Kingdom? A King, a territory, subjects, and a law
 - a. The King: Jesus Christ
 - 1) Luke 1:33 - "He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end."
 - b. Territory: The hearts of human beings
 - 1) Luke 17:21 - "The Kingdom of God is within you."
 - 2) Cannot point to it on a map.
 - c. Subjects: People from all nations and backgrounds
 - 1) Gal. 3:28
 - d. The Law: God's word
 - 1) 2Tim. 3:16-17; Gal. 1:8-9; 2John 9

- 2) Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19
- 3) Clearly God does not want the law of His kingdom altered.
- 3. As citizens in the kingdom of God, we are subject to all of the responsibilities and entitled to all the privileges incumbent on citizens and subjects of the King.
- B. The Perfect Body of Christ - Col. 1:18
 - 1. Eph. 1:22-23 - While there are many members, there is only one head.
 - 2. Eph. 4:11-16 - a close knit body.
- C. The Privileged Family - Rom. 8:16-17
 - 1. God is Father; Christ is elder brother; a rather distinguished family.
- D. The Patterned Church
 - 1. God has always expected His people to follow His directions when building for Him.
 - a. Noah building the ark - Gen. 6:8-9, 22, 7:1, 5
 - b. Moses and tabernacle, ark, and priesthood.
 - 1) Ex. 25:9, 40, 26:30; Num. 8:4; Heb. 8:5
 - c. God has given a pattern for the construction of His church.
 - 1) 2Tim. 1:13
 - 2. Beginning marks: According to God's planned pattern.
 - a. Founder: Jesus Christ - Matt. 16:18 - "I will build my church."
 - b. Place: Jerusalem - Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 2:4, 16, 36-41, 47
 - c. Time: 33 AD - Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10
 - d. Head: Jesus Christ - Col. 1:18
 - 3. Organization: According to God's pattern.
 - a. Elders - Heb. 13:17
 - b. Deacons - Phil. 1:1
 - c. Teachers - 1Cor. 12:28
 - 1) In their role as communicators of the will of God, they are listed only after apostles and prophets.
 - d. Preachers - bearers of the good news of the gospel - Rom. 10:15
 - 1) Not authorized special clothing or titles.
 - 2) Reverend is for God; pastor is for elders; the preacher is just a servant of the Lord.
 - 3) Merely a member who proclaims the Gospel, and is subject to elders like any other member.
 - e. Members - 1Cor. 12:12 - the real strength of any church.
 - 4. God's chosen names for the church:
 - a. 1Cor. 1:2 - Church of God
 - b. Heb. 12:23 - Church of The Firstborn
 - c. Romans 16:16 - Churches of Christ
 - d. Col. 1:24 - The Body of Christ
 - e. Col. 1:13 - The Kingdom of His Dear Son
 - f. Rev. 21:2 - The Bride of Christ
 - g. 1Tim. 3:15 - The House of God

- h. Any church preaching and practicing all of the doctrine of Christ and calling itself by one of these names is accepted with God. Any other is not.
- 5. God's chosen names for His people: Isa. 65:14-15, 62:2
 - a. Acts 11:26 - Christians
 - b. Rom. 1:17 - Saints
 - c. Gal. 3:26 - Children
 - d. John 6:3 - Disciples
 - e. 1Peter 2:5 - Priests
 - f. Gal. 6:1 - Brethren.
 - g. God has authorized no other names for citizens in His kingdom.
- 6. God's chosen pattern for worship:
 - a. How we worship has always been an important matter with God.
 - 1) Cain and Abel; Nadab and Abihu
 - b. Acts 20:7 - Lord's Supper
 - c. 1Thes. 5:17 - Prayer
 - d. Col. 3:16 - Singing
 - e. 1Cor. 16:2 - Giving
 - f. Acts 20:7 - Bible instruction
- 7. God's chosen attitudes for worship:
 - a. Psalm 89:6-7; 1Cor. 14:33, 40; 1Tim. 3:15
 - b. God is to be feared, revered, and respected.
 - c. Worship must be conducted in a reverential and orderly manner.
 - d. God's word tells us how to conduct ourselves in a reverential, orderly manner.

Conclusion:

- A. We have traced the roots of the church of Christ, not from secular history, but from the word of God. That is significant.
- B. The entrance requirements into the Lord's Church, the Church of Christ, are taken from the word of God also, and are according to God's chosen pattern.
 - 1. Heb. 11:6; John 8:24 - Faith
 - 2. Luke 13:3 - Repentance
 - 3. Rom. 10:9-10 - Confession
 - 4. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38 - Baptism
- C. The Church is the advocate, not the administrator, of salvation. Your salvation is entirely and solely dependent on your choice to yield or resist the call of God through the Gospel.
 - 1. God does not require you to know all of His will and word in all things as a prerequisite to obeying the Gospel. You must know what to do to be saved, and you must desire to do it.