

that their religion could be used for social purposes, but Jesus strongly rebuked them. Jesus condemned the Jews because they wore elaborate clothing, loved the best seats, and the cleric title "rabbi" (Matt. 23:1-12). This same rebuke is true to those today who want to make the church into nothing more than a modern day civic club. To understand that the church is not a social club, we need to realize that we are not the center of worship. God is the center of our worship and we must make him the focus of our worship services, not ourselves (Jn. 4:24).

**Not an Afterthought.**

With the recent rise in premillennial

fiction books such as "Left Behind" and others, the church is being looked at more as an afterthought, than an original plan. Many in the premillennial camp believe that God planned to set up a 1000 year reign on earth, but His plan was thwarted and the church was created as an afterthought until the original plan could be set up. While this may be an attractive view to many, the Bible teaches the church has always been God's original plan. Paul said God was making his power known to princes and principalities through the church, which was "according to the eternal purpose" (Eph. 3:10-11). This passage clearly teaches that the church has been in the mind and plan of God from all eternity. The church is much more than an

afterthought. It is the forethought and divine plan of God that will last until Christ comes to receive it unto Himself (1 Cor. 15:24, Matt. 16:18-19).

The church of Christ was never meant to be a club for the elite of society and it definitely was not a quick fix in the mess-up of God's plans. Is the church that you are going to more of a social club than a place of worship to God? Does the church you attend focus its religion around the building more than the people? If so, then it is high time to return to the pattern of the New Testament Church. ~

**By Ben Bailey**

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## Saved By Faith, But Not By Faith Only



One must believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, in order to be saved from his sins. The Bible says: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, but unless we believe in Him, we cannot be saved. Jesus told the Jews "...if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). When Jesus

gave the Great Commission, He commanded: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16).

How can one believe? Some teach that faith is a gift of God, which is put in the sinner's heart by a miracle. But the Bible teaches: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of

God" (Romans 10:17). Paul shows how faith comes when he says: "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:13,14). It is necessary for the gospel of Christ to be preached so that sinners can believe and be saved. Where the gospel has not gone,

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Evening Worship Service \_\_\_ 6:00 PM  
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people have not heard, and no one has been saved. This is the reason we must preach the gospel to every person, in every nation, in the whole world (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46, 47).

What does it mean to believe? Some teach that one is saved by faith alone without any further acts of obedience. Is this true according to the teaching of the Bible? Mark tells of Jesus preaching in a house in Capernaum when so many gathered around that there was no room for any more. Four men had a friend who was paralyzed. They wanted Jesus to heal him, but they could not get through the crowd. They went up on the roof of the house. They made a hole and let down the bed on which their friend lay. The Bible says, "Jesus saw their faith" (Mark 2:1-5). How did He see their faith? It was by their actions. True faith can be seen by the works it produces.

James discusses the kind of faith which saves. He says, "...faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). He also says that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). He concludes his discussion by writing: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26).

Those who teach sinners are saved by faith only often use the conversion of the Philippian jailer to prove their doctrine (Acts 16:16-40). Paul and Silas were preaching in Philippi. They cast an evil spirit out of a slave girl.

Her masters had used the demon possessed girl to make money by telling people's fortunes. When they saw their way of making money was gone, they falsely accused Paul and Silas. The two preachers were beaten and thrown into prison. That night, God sent an earthquake which freed the prisoners. The keeper of the prison thought they had escaped. He was going to kill himself, but Paul said: "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." The man fell down before Paul and Silas and said: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Those who teach sinners are saved by belief only stop at this point. But the inspired Word tells more. The jailer was told to believe, but we have already learned that "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Paul and Silas "spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house." He could not believe until he had been taught. The preachers not only taught the jailer, but "all who were in his house." This means all his family were old enough to hear the gospel and understand it. There were no babies or small children who were too young to understand. Please notice verse 33: "And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized." What hour of the night was it? It was at midnight when the earthquake came (v. 25).

Let us sum up how the Philippian

jailer and his family were saved: (1) He asked, "What must I do?" (2) He was told to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;" (3) Paul and Silas preached the Word to him and his family so that they could believe, (4) He washed the stripes he had inflicted on Paul and Silas the previous day. This shows he had repented; (5) He and his family were all baptized. Did the Philippian jailer think it was important that he be baptized? Obviously he did, for he did not even wait until the next morning. As soon as he knew he was lost and learned about the Saviour, he believed, repented, and was baptized. That is the way sinners are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. It is not by belief alone! Sinners are saved by faith which obeys. Paul described to the Galatian Christians the kind of faith we must have in order to please God: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6).

Have you been saved from your sins? If not, you can be saved today. Believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son who died to save you. Repent of your sins. Confess your faith in Christ. Be buried with Christ in baptism so that your sins will be washed away. Then serve Christ faithfully all the days of your life. You can die with a sure hope of going to Heaven (Acts 16:31; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:37; Romans 6:3-5; Revelation 2:10).

Author unknown

## The Nature of the New Testament Church



Two thousand years after the institution of the Lord's church, the ideal pattern for the New Testament church has almost become lost. In a world where an individual can find a denomination that believes and practices almost anything, it has become increasingly difficult to identify the New Testament church. However, simple laws of logic and reasoning tell us that a thing will be made according to its kind. In Genesis chapter one the phrase "according to its kind" or a similar statement occurs 18 times. By using this phrase, God is trying to tell us that a creation naturally follows its pattern. For example, birds are not created from monkeys and giraffes do not follow the pattern of a whale. Each creation follows and represents its maker's pattern. This lesson is extremely important when it comes to the nature and pattern of the New Testament church. When we look to the Bible as the blueprint for the church, we can tell if a church is the church of the New Testament. To identify the Lord's church in the midst of all this denominational chaos, we must first identify what the church is not.

### Not A Building.

The Church of Christ is not composed of walls, ceilings, and

pews. The bold martyr Stephen proclaimed, "God does not dwell in temples made with hands..." (Acts 7:48-50). Even during the time of the Israelites God did not want his people to trust in the temple. In Jeremiah, the people were crying out "The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord" (Jer. 7:4). Yet, their trust in the building did not save them from the impending Babylonian exile (Jer. 25:9-12). Buildings burn, temples fall, yet the church of the living God will stand forever because it is comprised of individuals. The church of Christ in the New Testament is made up of people, not 2 X 4's (1 Cor. 12:27). May we never let our sanctuary become our cemetery. The Church of Christ is not a building.

### Not a Denomination.

The word denomination by its very definition is in direct contradiction with the New Testament pattern. Denomination means to call by or name something after another. In the New Testament, the idea of naming the church after a person other than Christ is strongly condemned. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). In this

context, Paul is dealing with the root problem of denominationalism. Some were saying, "I am of Paul, or I am Apollos, or I am of Cephas" (1 Cor. 1:12). Paul points out that denomination is division by asking them, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or, were you baptized in the name of Paul" (1 Cor. 1:13)? For anyone who desires to have a church named after them, Paul sets down two simple criteria. First, one must be crucified as a sinless sacrifice for his followers. No person on earth today can serve as a sinless sacrifice (Heb. 10:12; Rom. 3:23). Second, the leader of any group must have the God-given authority to command baptism in his name. In the New Testament there is no authority for baptizing into any man's name, except Christ (Matt. 28:18-20). Therefore, denominationalism violates the pattern of the New Testament church. The Church of Christ is not a denomination.

### Not a Social Club.

To many people, the church is nothing more than a glorified social club. It is a place to dress exquisitely for and be seen rubbing elbows with the elite of society. For some, going to church is nothing more than a good public relations move. It is very interesting to note just how faithful candidates for political office become around election time. The Jews had the mindset