

## WHAT MAKES THIS CHURCH SO DIFFERENT?

Introduction: Lesson Text: Matthew 16:18

From a lesson by Jim Bell

A. When someone makes a comparison of this church with most of the churches around us, a person might conclude that we are a bit peculiar.

B. We have no piano or organ; insist on the Lord's Supper every Sunday; have no collections except on the first day of the week. We insist on wearing only the name Christian. We claim to be no part of any denomination.

C. What is it that makes this church so different?

I. The Lord Established His Church Matthew 16:18 and Acts 2:36-47

A. Notice that Jesus established only one church. He never promised to build "churches". Would any contend there were different denominations in the days of apostles? Romans 16:16

B. Jesus was and is the Head of the church. Ephesians 1:22,23

1. The Lord has directed the affairs of His church through His Spirit led apostles.

2. Whatever name they wore, they wore that name because Christ told them. Whatever they did in worship, they did that because that is what Christ instructed. Whatever the organization of the church, it was that way because of His teachings, because He's the Head!

3. Whatever you read in New Testament of the Lord's church, it was true of that church because Christ planned & built it that way!

\*\*\*\*\*See PowerPoint charts\*\*\*\*\*

C. For approximately 100 years the church remained true to the guidance and teachings of the apostles of Christ.

II. Eventually there came a DEPARTURE \*\*\*\*\*

A. This did not happen overnight. It was gradual and took place over a period of several hundred years; with various innovations

\*\*\*\*\* (See Chart).\*\*\*\*\*

1. Those familiar with the New Testament know these things not found in God's Word. All these are the innovations of men and constitute a departure from the teachings of Christ.

B. This departure was foretold in scripture. 1 Tim.4:1-3; 2 Thess.2:1-5.

III. Religious leaders later arose known as REFORMERS.

A. From their influence and teachings there resulted the Protestant Reformation (15th - 16th centuries).

B. While these men had good intentions and rejected much of the religious error in the church, they also made some very serious mistakes.

C. Three major mistakes as a result of the work of the reformers.

1. While they rejected certain additions that had crept into the church, they accepted others.

2. They not only accepted some changes, but they introduced some of their own doctrines and practices. For instance:

a) The doctrine of salvation by faith only, even though the Bible says otherwise. James 2:24.

b) The doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy; that one cannot fall from grace, although the Bible says otherwise. Galatians 5:4

3. Perhaps the worst result of the teachings of the reformers is there came about hundreds of different denominations which is condemned in scripture. 1 Corinthians 1:10 and John 17:20-22

D. Obviously the Reformation was just not the answer to the apostasy that had occurred in the church.

IV. What is the Answer? The need is not for reformation but for RESTORATION.

A. The need is to go back to the Bible and conform the church of which we are a part to be just like those churches we read about in the New Testament.

1. Those churches in New Testament days were just exactly what Christ wanted them to be. Whatever they taught or practiced; whatever name they wore, etc. that's what Christ wanted.

2. Matthew 16:18 - "MY CHURCH" - is the church as Jesus Christ planned and built it.

3. The "REFORMATION" - are the churches of men as men have planned and built them. See Psalms 127:1

B. The New Testament is the "blueprint" for the church. It is a blueprint that God has given, not man. It is a perfect blueprint.

1. If we want the church today as it existed in the scriptures, we have to take the New Testament as our only blueprint

2. Without adding to or taking away, but building exactly. See Heb.8:5

C. This is the goal and intentions of this local congregation.

1. Whatever peculiarities a person may see in this church is not because we take glory in being peculiar or that we just want to be different; those peculiarities are built upon the fact that we're trying to follow the blueprint exactly.

2. We would like to think that if somehow we could take the apostle Paul or one of those first century Christians and set him in our midst, he would find himself completely comfortable. He would understand and agree with all that we teach and practice.

3. We would like to be a local congregation like those we read of in the New Testament. We would like to take our place right along side them and simply be a church of the Lord.

4. In order to do that we have to be very careful that everything we do and teach is just exactly according to the New Testament and that we follow that blueprint exactly as it calls for.

V. Let us notice some of these so-called "peculiarities." and why they exist.

A. The Name We Wear. We refuse to wear any other name than just the name "Christian."

1. Why do we insist on wearing that name and only that name? It's the ONLY name found in the blueprint - Acts 11:26, I Peter 4:16

2. The Lord hasn't given any other name or names to attach to that. And I'm not going to add to His blueprint.

3. Someone may say, "But is there really anything in a name anyway?"

4. All through the Bible, God places emphasis on names. See Chart: Man Given Names / God Given Names

a) The name of Abraham and Sarah - Genesis 17:5,15; 32:26-28

b) The name of John - Luke 1:13,57f - Could they have compromised and called him Zacharias John?

c) The name of Jesus, the Christ - Matthew 1:20f

d) The same God has also given only one name today - "Christian"

5. Just as surely as these wore the name God gave, that's the name we ought to wear and we must not compromise or add to God's Word.

B. Free Will Offerings Only On the 1st day of the week.

1. This is how our funds are raised for the money we use in Lord's work.

2. Many people may like this, yet it seems odd to them, especially when they visit us and notice we have no night collections during a gospel meeting. We have no rummage sales or cake bakes, etc.

3. Why be so different when there are so many ways to raise money?

4. The simple reason is this: it's a matter of what the "blueprint" of God's Word calls for. I Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7

#### C. Singing Only without Instruments of Music in Worship

1. People may find this to be the most peculiar thing about us.

2. You know why we don't have any instruments in worship? Because none are found in the "blueprint." Eph 5:19; Col 3:16

3. There are two kinds of music. Chart: Vocal / Instrumental. Every verse. in the blueprint that mentions music calls for vocal - Eph.5:19; Col.3:16; 1 Cor.14:15

4. Someone may ask, "But does it really matter that much?" Would you want someone tampering with your blueprint for your house?

5. Someone else may say, "But didn't David use instrumental music?"

a) Remember we're talking about the blueprint given for the Lord's church of the New Testament.

b) David lived under another "blueprint," the law of Moses; which also called for animal sacrifices, burning incense, etc.

D. The Lord's Supper on the 1st day of the week and every week. The reason we do this is because that's what the "blueprint" calls for. Acts 20:7

E. Immersion for Baptism - Col.2:12; Rom.6:3 Sprinkling as a substitute or alternative is not found in the teachings of the scriptures.

#### F. The Udenominational Nature of the Church

You often hear people complain about the denominational systems and how the money is sent to some headquarters. Acts 14:23; Phil 1:1

#### G. The Plan of Salvation with emphasis on baptism for remission of sin.

1. Why do we teach that? This is what the "blueprint" says - Acts 2:38

2. Protestantism has taught salvation by "faith only" but the New Testament says - Mk.16:16; Jas.2:24

#### Conclusion

A. We must build according to the "blueprint"; exactly as it calls for and not deviate. Hebrews 8:5

B. Someone may object by saying, "But God is such a merciful, loving God; maybe He's not as strict as you think He is." But what if He is?

C. We're dealing w/matters that are eternal in consequence. We must never risk or gamble with our souls. Matt. 7:21-23 and Lk. 6:46

Illustrations:

Suppose someone years ago planned and built a beautiful house. The architect drew up the blueprint; the builders followed the blueprint and it was the most beautiful house anyone had ever seen. But as generations came and went, that house fell into other people's hands and they began to remodel it to their own liking. They kept changing and adding things till eventually that house hardly looked anything like the original house at all. But suppose others came along and said, "You know, that house was a beautiful house before it was ever remodeled. Let's build a house like it." So, they set out to build; but instead of going back to the blueprint and following it exactly they just build it somewhat as they want it. They correct some of the changes, but they accept others and make some of their own changes. The first thing you know, houses begin to spring up all over the country side which have a similarity to that original house but not exactly the same as the house was originally. The question is: How would you build that original house just like it was from the beginning? That's an easy question and the answer is: You have to go back to the blueprint; follow it exactly and build according to the plan.

Various materials can go into building a house, two of which is brick or stone. Suppose your blueprint calls for brick and the builder uses stone thinking, "I don't think it really matters, and I think it would look a whole lot better out of stone." So he makes the house of stone; or a combination of the two. And he thinks, "Besides, the blueprint doesn't say not to use stone." Yes that's right, but you called for brick. What would your attitude be? Just as you would not want a builder to tamper with your blueprint; adding to it or taking from it, so our Lord doesn't want us to tamper with His blueprint given in the pages of His Word.