

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## Facts About The New Testament Church: The Relationships of the Church

By Jimmy Tuten, Jr.

The New Testament church is a called out body of people who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. They were called by the Gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 2:14). Having responded to the call of God, members of the church were translated from darkness to light (Col. 1:13). They must now walk as children of light (1 Jn. 1:5-7).

As a body of saved people, the church sustains certain relationships. These relationships present to the mind certain characteristics and concepts about the nature of the church. In this writing we observe these relationships in order to give the reader a better understanding of what the church is. In this way a greater appreciation of the Divine institution for which Christ died can be brought about.

**(1) In relation to God, the church is the family of God.** The churches of Galatia were made up of people who had believed and been baptized (Gal. 3:26-27). As such they were called “*children of God*” (Gal. 3:26). As the children of God they constituted the family of God. If we are not children of God we are children of the devil. “*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God...*” (1 Jn. 3:10). These children who belong to God stand in relation to God. They are His! In relation to each other they are brethren. The Bible says, “*for both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren*” (Heb. 2:11). Various inspired writers often referred to members of the church as “*brethren*” (1 Cor. 6:8; 1 Pet. 5:9). “*Brethren*” is a vital term. It signified a family relationship; a relationship to God. As such it means the same today. It is a great honor to be part of the family of God. Only then can we address Him as “*our Father*” (Matt. 6:9).

**(2) In relation to construction, the church is called the building of God.** Paul said, “*ye are God’s building*” (1 Cor. 3:9). This is a rich feature, full of meaning. It is a feature Paul elaborates on in verses 10-23. He would have us take heed how we build on the foundation (1 Cor. 3:12-15). There is the danger of building on human wisdom. Instead of building with imperishable truth, some may build with perishable material or even forsake the true foundation altogether. This is a danger to be guarded against. The congregation is the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16). Woe to him who builds to make it something else!

**(3) As to form of government, the church is a kingdom.** Contrary to the doctrine of premillennialists, the kingdom of God does in fact now exist. The writer of Hebrews says, “*wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved...*” (Heb. 12:28). John said, “*who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom*” (Rev. 1:9). Paul says we are translated into the kingdom (Col. 1:13). The now existent kingdom is identified with the church. This is evident from the fact that Paul says there is “*one body*” (Eph. 4:4). When this statement was written the church existed (Acts 2:47). So did the kingdom (Heb. 12:28). Yet the inspired apostle Paul said there is “*one body.*” This shows that the church and the kingdom are the same. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, “*I will build my church.*” In the next verse he referred to the keys of the kingdom. There is only one door and the keys of the kingdom fit the door of the church. The door of the kingdom is the door of the church. The term “*church*” presents the feature as seen in the nature of the members, i.e., the called out people. The body is called a church to emphasize this “*called out*” feature. It is a kingdom because it is ruled on the principle of a monarchy. The institution over which Christ rules is the church (Eph. 1:22). As head of the church, Christ is King (1 Tim. 6:15). He is head of the church and ruler over the kingdom at the same time. Thus the church is a kingdom. The church is identified as the kingdom. They both exist now as one institution. We can be members of the church (Acts 2:38, 47) and citizens in the kingdom (Eph. 2:19).

**(4) In relation to the work accomplished, the church is the vineyard of The Lord.** Paul referred to the church as a *“husbandry”* or tillage (1 Cor. 3:9). This metaphor, applied to the local church, suggests diligent toil (in this case of the apostle Paul and his fellow workers) and spiritual fruitfulness. To stress that we are all laborers in the kingdom (Matt. 21:43), the Lord stressed the laborer in the vineyard aspect (Matt. 21:28-31, 33-43). In this we sow seed (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23), as well as bear fruit (Jn. 15:8; Gal. 5:22-24). Jesus expects us to work in the church. That is why He has hired laborers into His vineyard (Matt. 20:1). We can rest assured that our Death! labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58). God help us to always abound in the work of the Lord.

**(5) In relation to Christ, the church is the bride of Christ.** In the Ephesian letter Paul demonstrated the responsibilities of the husband and wife. After doing this he said, *“this is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church”* (Eph. 5:32). To the church at Rome, Paul said, *“wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead...”* (Rom. 7:4). These verses clearly demonstrate that the church is the bride of Christ. As a wife reverences and obeys her husband, members of the church are to reverence and obey Christ. The wife wears the name of the husband, so the church wears the name of Christ. Hence, it is called the “Church of Christ” to show that Christ owns the church (Rom. 16:16). This is an endearing and beloved relationship. It should be cherished by those who are saints.

### Conclusion

Friend, you can be a member of the church. As the *“house of God”* (1 Tim. 3:15), the church is God’s family. You become a part of God’s family by becoming a child of God. The Bible says, *“for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Gal. 3:26-27, emphasis mine, jt). Believe and be baptized today. You will become a child of God and a member of the greatest institution on earth, the church of Christ (Acts 2:38, 47). The church was purchased at the cost of the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). Surely you want to be a part of it. We plead for the distinctiveness of the New Testament church. – *Truth Magazine*, July 15, 1976. ■

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### The Church

By Joe R. Price

He said to them, *“But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”* (Matt. 16:15-18)

The church of Christ was not an afterthought in the mind of God. The church was not built upon Peter or any other man, but upon the foundational truth Peter confessed; Jesus is *“the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Jesus Christ is the foundation upon which His church rests (1 Cor. 3:11). The church is important because Jesus purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28). The strength of the grave could not prevent Jesus from building His church. Do not cheapen the church of the Lord by turning it into a social club, a political action committee or a creed-driven agency of human wisdom. The church is the body of Christ and He is its head (Eph. 1:22-23). The church and salvation are inextricably linked since the church is His body and Jesus is *“the Savior of the body.”* The church Jesus built is composed of souls saved by His gospel. He continues to add saved ones to it (Acts 2:47). We know the church is valuable to Christ. How valuable is the church to you? – *Sword Tips*, July 17, 2014. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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