

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

The Church That Jesus Built

By David Weeks

Jesus promised to build His church, and the gates of Hades would not prevail against it (Mt. 16:18). His church will stand forever (Dan. 2:44-45). It is the church that was prophesied in the Old Testament, once called *“the mountain of the Lord’ house”* (Isa. 2:2). This little text from Isaiah (vs. 1-4), tells us much about the church of Christ.

The Lord’s church was established in the *“latter days.”* Many people are confused about the phrase *“the last days”* or the *“latter days”* and think that they are yet to come in our future. But, according to the Bible, we have been living in the *“last days”* since the day of Pentecost. Joel foretold the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the apostles (Joel 2:28-32). This event happened on Pentecost, A.D. 33 (see: Acts 2:1-4). It was a day of visions and wonders. The people heard the sound of a rushing mighty wind. Then the apostles spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. The people were confused and believed this was a sign of drunkenness, when in fact, it was a miracle of God.

When Peter stood up to preach, he stated emphatically: *“This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel”* (Acts 2:16). Here, it is settled by God, what the *“latter days”* means. Peter said that Joel was talking about the day of Pentecost. That’s here and when the latter days started.

This is important in the discussion of the Lord’s church. The genuine church of Christ started on Pentecost, not some time later in history. Every single church built by men started after the seventh century A.D. The first pope, Boniface III was not elevated to the head of the apostate church (known now as the Catholic Church) until 606 A.D. Pick any denomination, and you will find its origin at a later date on the pages of history after Pentecost. If a church was established even one day after Pentecost, it is not the Lord’s church!

The Lord’s church is exalted above the hills. This is a provable fact. Anything Jesus did not build will be uprooted and will come to nothing. Proof that the Lord’s church is *“exalted above the hills”* is the fact that Jesus is its head (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). It is also built according to the Lord’s pattern (Heb. 8:5), making every other church inferior to it by nature and design. Denominations came from men, not from Christ.

All nations flow to the church of Christ. The church that Jesus built is for every man who will seek salvation on the Lord’s terms. Jesus, we are told, is the *“author of eternal salvation”* to all who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9). Any person from any nation can hear and believe the gospel (Rom. 10:17; Jn. 8:24); he can repent of his sins (Lk.13:3,5; Acts 17:30); he can confess his faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10); and he can be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of his sins (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21). By doing these things, one will be cleansed from his sins. It does not matter his heritage, he can become a New Testament Christian.

In the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the church, there is neither *“Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female,”* for we are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). The artificial exclusions of men do not matter, but the divine inclusion of all who obey God, does.

The church of Christ is a kingdom of peace. Every other kingdom in history has risen onto the world stage through warfare. The United States of America fought an eight-year war of independence from Great Britain. That war cost an estimated 116,000 lives on both sides. World War I saw roughly 40 million soldiers and civilians killed. World War II recorded more than 75 million deaths, including military and civilians, across Europe and the Pacific.

However, the greatest kingdom to ever exist, the kingdom of Christ, was established, and grew to fill the whole world (Dan. 2:35, 45), without a single shot being fired. At present, there are Christians thriving in every part of the globe. These people are citizens of different countries, but they bow the knee to the same King, Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:10; Rev. 1:7). The only blood that was shed in the establishment of His kingdom was that of the Lord Himself. He died for the sins of the world (Jn. 3:16), and He purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28). The only casualties are the dead in sin being buried and raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:1-4).

Isaiah's words are filled with great hopefulness: the kingdom of the Lord is one of peace. Swords have been turned into plowshares, and spears into pruning hooks (vs. 4).

Citizenship in the church of Christ is voluntary, but necessary. Every citizen of an earthly kingdom enters it either by birth, which does not require his consent, or by compulsion in warfare, or by naturalization, which requires his submission to the rules of men. Entrance into the kingdom of Christ, the Lord's church, is voluntary. No one entering the Lord's church is forced to do so. The gospel is preached and men hear it (Rom. 10:17). Then, they respond to it in obedience (Heb. 5:8-9). No preacher beats his audience into submission with a stick or a brick. No one has ever been compelled against his will to become a Christian. Rather, strong appeals are made through the preaching of the gospel to come to the side of Christ and to be baptized into Him (Rom. 6:1-4).

It is essential that all men take this step. Sin separates everyone from God (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Jesus Christ is the only way to have access to the Father in heaven (Jn. 14:6). The only hope one has is to be in Christ, and therefore, to be in His body, the church (1 Cor. 12:13). If you want to be saved, you must be a member of the church of Christ. No one will force you into it. But you must choose it.

What will you do with the gospel today? Will you take your place in the church - the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ? ■



Preaching About Baptism

By Dennis Abernathy

No subject has been discussed and debated more than baptism. Is it essential to salvation or is it not? Is baptism immersion, sprinkling, or simply pouring water on one? Are infants to be baptized? Is one to be baptized because he is saved, or in order to be saved? The questions are almost endless. Therefore, many just decide the subject of baptism is too controversial, and they do not preach or teach on the subject at all.

For example, let me tell you a little story. Preachers in a small town proposed a meeting in which all the preachers would take alternate turns to preach. A certain gospel preacher, had not been consulted on the arrangement, so he called the other preachers to request his turn to preach. He was informed that an agreement had been made that the subject of baptism would not be mentioned-that they had agreed to preach Christ and say nothing about baptism. The preacher accepted the conditions and agreed to preach without mentioning the word baptism. It was agreed, and he announced in advance his subject was ***“What Must I do to be Saved.”***

People came from all over to hear him preach. He preached with such animation and eloquence on salvation, and the love of God, that brought salvation to man through Jesus Christ. When he reached the point of the question – What must I do to be saved? he turned to Mark 16: 15-16 and read the words of Christ: *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and doeth that thing I promised not to mention, shall be saved.”* He then read Acts 2:38: *“Repent, and do that thing I promised not to mention, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”* And he proceeded to read every verse in the New Testament on baptism, and called it that thing I promised not to mention! ■

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

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