

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

THE DISTINCTIVE NATURE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST -AS TO THE WORLD "THE CALLED OUT"-

Though there are many religious institutions in the world today there is but one that stands out distinctive from all others as the one church built by Jesus Christ. The denominational world (and many of our own brethren) decry the declaration of the oneness and distinctiveness of the churches of Christ. Still, the Bible clearly indicates that the church built by Christ is distinct from those religious bodies established by and built upon the creeds and doctrines of men.

To His disciples Jesus declared, "*I will build by church...*" (Matthew 16:18). In answer to his enemies Jesus affirmed, "*But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men...Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*" (Matthew 15:9,13). These statements alone indicate that the church that Christ established, which is rooted and built up in His word (Luke 8:11; Colossians 2:6-7), is to be separate and distinct from those institutions established and built up by the traditions of men.

Still just what is the nature of the church? What are some of the distinguishing characteristics of the precious blood bought eternally purposed church of Christ? In order to answer this question, it should first be noted that the name "church of Christ" is not a name at all! It is simply a phrase that indicates possession of the church. The church of Christ is the church that belongs to Christ. Nowhere in the Scriptures does the church actually have a name. However, there are many designations given to the church for the purpose of illustrating its distinctive nature in comparison to manmade sectarian bodies. In addition to the one already stated, the church of Christ, there are also such designations as "kingdom of heaven," "body of Christ," "household of God," and "vineyard." Each of these emphasize a certain characteristic of the church and helps those who seek for the New Testament church to find it among the confusion and clutter of the denominational world. Before considering these, let us first consider further designation of the term "church of Christ."

When one considers the church in relation to the world it is the "church of Christ." The word "church" is from the compound Greek word "ekklesia" (*ek*—out; *kaleo*—to call). Hence the word in its purest sense means "a called out body of people." It is worthy to note that the Greek word is not always translated "church," neither does it always refer to a religious body. At Ephesus, of those who gathered together at the instigation of Demetrius the silversmith, it is stated "*Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together*" (Acts 19:32). Here we have the word *ekklesia* translated "assembly" referring to a called out body of people for the purpose of protest against the church at Ephesus and against the preaching of the gospel.

When the word *ekklesia* is used in reference to the church, or called out, of Christ it indicates that the church, in relation to the world has been "called out of the world." That this is the proper interpretation is clearly seen from the Bible. Standing before Pilate, Jesus affirmed "*my kingdom is not of this world...*" (John 18:36). The kingdom is the church (Matthew 16:19) and it has been called out of the world into the spiritual fellowship with the Father and the Son (I John 1:1-7).

The means by which the church has been called out is the soul saving gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter instructed that God has called us out of the world by His Son. "*But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you*" (I Peter 5:10). To this the Hebrews writer agrees as he state, "*God, who at sundry times*

SHEEP, YOU HAVE A SHEPHERD AM

Text: _____

- I. The Sheep's _____ with the Shepherd
 - A. He _____, they _____
 - B. He _____, they _____
 - C. He _____, they _____
- II. The Sheep's _____ with the Shepherd
 - A. The _____
 - B. The _____
 - C. The _____
- III. The Sheep's _____ with the Shepherd
 - A. The _____
 - B. The _____
 - C. The _____
- IV. The Sheep's _____ with the Shepherd
 - A. The _____
 - B. The _____

LET MY PEOPLE GO PM

Text: _____

- I. God Provided _____
 - A. Their _____
 - B. Their _____
 - C. Their _____
- II. God Provided _____
 - A. _____ from _____
 - B. _____ from _____
- III. God Provided _____
 - A. He Provided _____
 - B. He Provided _____
 - C. He Provided _____

*and in divers manner spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2). Speaking to us through His own Son, God has called us out of the world that we might be sanctified through the Spirit to serve Him. The calling of God through Christ is accomplished by the preaching of the gospel of Christ, which has been revealed by the Spirit, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: **Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ**” (II Thessalonians 2:13-14).*

The result of the calling, through the obedience of those who accept the calling is fellowship with God and the called out of Christ (I John 1:1-7; Acts 2:42). Thus, all who receive the calling through obedience are “added to the church of Christ,” i.e., they are added to the “called out” body of Christ (Acts 2:47).

Thus, the term “church of Christ” is not a name of the church, but rather a designation of possession **and** an illustration of the nature of the church in relation to the world. The church of Christ is the “called out body of Christ.” Called out of the world by the soul saving grace of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

-Ronnie Scherffius

WHOSE FAULT IS IT?

A Christian and an atheist barber were once walking through the city slums. Said the atheist barber to the Christian: “This is why I cannot believe in a God of love. If God is as kind as you say, He would not permit all this poverty, disease, and squalor. He would not allow these poor bums to be addicted to dope and other character-destroying habits. No, I cannot believe in a God who permits these things.”

The Christian was silent until they met a man who was especially unkempt and filthy. His hair was hanging down his neck and he had a half-inch of stubble on his face. Said the Christian, “You cannot be a very good barber or you would not permit a man like that to continue living in this neighborhood without a haircut or a shave.” Indignantly the barber answered: “Why blame me for that man’s condition. I cannot help that he is like that. He has never come into my shop; I could fix him up and make him look like a gentleman!” Giving the barber a penetrating look, the Christian said: “Then do not blame God for allowing these people to continue in their evil ways, when he is constantly inviting them to salvation. The reason these people are slaves to sin is that they refuse the One who died to save and deliver them” (Matthew 11:28-32; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; I John 3:16; Ephesians 2:1-3).

THE BOOK OF DELIVERANCE

The book of Exodus is viewed by a variety of people in a variety of ways, sometimes in its proper setting and sometimes not. To many it is still a book of authority that should have precedence still in matters of governing the spiritual lives of men. Others perhaps take it to an opposite extreme in believing it to be a book of outdated antiquity that should be left to rot in the recesses of time. However, it is between the two that the happy medium of proper placement can be found (Romans 15:4).

Exodus receives its title from that given to it in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which means “going out” or “departure” and is drawn from the main thrust of the book’s record, that of the Israelites coming out of Egypt. All credible evidence indicates Moses to be the inspired penman of this book, including the fact that the first word of the text in the Hebrew language is “and” showing it to be a continuation of the Genesis record, also written by Moses. And who better qualified to write the history of Israel and her relationship with God than the leader of Israel and her mediator to God? It likely was written near the close of the forty-year wilderness wandering that occurred in around 1400 B.C., but the time covered in the text spans an interesting point in Israel’s history.

Israel’s association with Egypt long preceded the tyrannical Pharaoh’s bondage of the multiplied nation. A short time after Abram was called by God to leave Ur of the Chaldees and journey into Canaan the land was stricken with a famine. In order to survive Abram took his family into Egypt to escape the famine. It was then three generations later that Joseph was sold into Egypt by the Midianites who had bought him out of the pit into which his brothers had cast him. After becoming the overseer of the house of Potiphar, Joseph’s brethren entered Egypt, later followed by Jacob their father. It is with this brief summary of events from the last several chapters of Genesis that Exodus opens with seventy souls of Jacob’s children in Egypt. Seeing that the book covers from Joseph’s death to the building of the tabernacle in Sinai, Exodus spans a period of some 215 years, the first chapter covering about 135 of those years, and the final 39 chapters covering the first 80 years of Moses’ life, the other of the 215 years.

Moses’ purpose for writing this book is manifold in nature. It continues the redemptive theme began in Genesis 3:15 in relating the seedline of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through whom the Messiah would come (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18). Also it records the history of Israel as being in bondage yet being subject to physical redemption as they were led out by the hand of God and overseen by His servant Moses. Then it continues as a brief exposure of idolatry and false, vain worship as God establishes Himself as the one only and true God. And then it finally teaches the eternal lesson that obedience to God’s precepts (including works) are absolutely necessary in order to receive the promised blessings. There is so much to learn from so many lessons in Exodus, but it is that which should be magnified and studied in awe because of the infinite mercy and wisdom of God.

Exodus carries with it two basic themes that really tie together: redemption and deliverance, both foreshadows of what is available in Christ. Israel was able to find redemption both in and out of Egypt; in Egypt through the Passover lamb to save the firstborn and out of Egypt through the atonement offerings. However, also deliverance is a major theme in Exodus because the book opens with Israel in bondage and closes with them free and headed toward the land of promise. As mentioned, these two themes pointed forward to what is available in Christ. Redemption is found through Christ being man’s Passover Lamb and Atonement Offering for sin today (John 1:29,36; Romans 5:11). Then, also, Christ is the one through whom deliverance from the bondage of sin is made possible (Hebrews 2:15-18).

However, the real value of the book is in its portrayal of Christ to come. First, Moses’ life is recorded and is evident to be a type of Christ, as both were prophets, rulers, lawgivers, deliverers, etc. Then Christ is seen as the Passover Lamb (I Corinthians 5:7). Also, Christ is seen in the establishment of the Levitical priesthood, as He is the church’s Great High Priest today (Hebrews 4:14-16; 9:11-12,24-28). Finally, because to list all would be impossible, Christ is seen in the building of the tabernacle wherein the church of Christ is in many ways designed (figuratively) like unto that tabernacle (Hebrews 9).

The book of Exodus contains so much that is beneficial for all areas of Bible study it is hard to put it into words. But may its inspired text forever be studied in its context and in its importance to the glory of God.

-Andy Brewer