

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 ORGANIZATION: A BODY-

Many people in the religious world today are confused to spiritual matters, especially as pertaining to the church. Many have the attitude of "Jesus yes, but the church NO!" Others, while being faithful to the "church," consider the church as nothing more than a temporary institution established by God only after the failure of Jesus to set up His kingdom because of the rejection of the prophesied Christ by the Jews. All who hold this attitude fail to realize that the church is the kingdom of heaven and thus have no great love and loyalty to the church. Because of these attitudes and misconceptions it is profitable for one to study the nature of the church of Christ in light of the fact that, in the Bible, the church is referred to in more than one way. Each reference to the church vividly illustrating different characteristics of the church helping Christians to understand their word and position in the church.

Thus far in our study of the nature of the church we have considered the church in its relation to the world and its government. The term "church of Christ" is not a name, but simply a designation indicating Christ's possession of His church and the Christians relation to the world. Christians are "the church," I.e., they are "the called out." Christians have been called out of the world in order to serve God and Christ. Additionally, the church of Christ is referred to as "the kingdom of heaven." This descriptive phrase indicates that the government of the church of Christ is a monarchy with an all authoritative King, Jesus Christ (I Timothy 6:15). The spiritual nature of this kingdom is further emphasized in that the kingdom is the kingdom of **heaven** (cf. John 18:36). Another descriptive phrase exemplifying the nature of the church is the phrase "the body of Christ."

The Church—The Body of Christ

The apostle Paul repeatedly referred to the church of Christ as a body. To the Corinthians Paul wrote, "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*" (I Corinthians 12:27). Paul informed the Ephesians that the temporary miraculous gifts were for the purpose of, "*...the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...*" (Ephesians 5:12). Speaking of Christ's authority Paul instructed, "*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body...*" (Ephesians 1:22-23). Speaking to the Colossians of Christ's superiority and supreme nature he states simply, "*And he is the head of the body, the church...*" (Colossians 1:18a).

Jesus Christ—The Head of the Body

In every figure illustrating the church, Jesus is always supreme. The church as a kingdom has Jesus as its Lord and King (Acts 2:36; I Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16). As a priesthood the church has Jesus as its High Priest (Hebrews 3:1; 4:15). When the church is illustrated as the body of Christ, Jesus is always the head of the body (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; et al). This being true, the idea and organization of an earthly head of the church so often found in the denominational world is without foundation and merit. The Catholic Church has the pope (papa or father) as the head of the church who stands as the "vicar of Christ." A *vicar* by definition is "a person deputed or authorized to perform the functions of another; a substitute in office." Thus, in the Catholic church the pope serves as a substitution as the head of the church and performs the functions and duties of Jesus Christ on earth. Among Protestant churches (denominations such as Baptist, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutheran, Episcopal, etc.) the head of the church is made up of men and woman who serve on counsels or representative bodies at yearly conventions. These "heads" serve to change and/or modify "church doctrine" based on the majority vote of the appointed "heads" of the church (cf. Deuteronomy 4:2; Galatians 1:6-9; et al).

One fact that must be seriously considered in the illustration of the church of Christ as the body of Christ is that a physical body has only one head. The church is illustrated as a physical body so that the work and organization of the church and headship and all authority of Jesus might be clearly demonstrated.

Relation of the Head and Body

Just as the members of the physical body are subject to the head, even so are all members of the spiritual body of God subject to Him. Jesus Christ as the head of the

“BE SOBER, BE VIGILANT” AM

Text: _____

I. Watch _____

A. Watch _____ for _____

B. Watch _____ for _____

C. Watch _____ for _____

II. Watch _____

A. _____ will be _____

B. _____ will be _____

C. _____ will be _____

III. Watch _____

A. _____ can be _____

B. _____ can be _____

C. _____ can be _____

NUMBERED OF GOD PM

Text: _____

I. _____ by _____

A. To _____ they had to be an _____

B. To _____ we must be a _____

II. _____ by _____

A. _____ enough to _____

B. _____ enough to _____

III. _____ by _____

A. _____ of _____

B. _____

“Sorry, we don’t have potted geraniums,” the clerk said. She then added helpfully, “Could you use African violets?”
 “No,” replied the man sadly. “It was geraniums my wife told me to water.”

body is Divine and it is his will that stands as the divine directive for His body (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:22f; 5:23). Furthermore just as the human body has many members, even so does the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:12,20). The human body is made up of muscles and bones, arms, hands and fingers, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, etc. There are also various internal organs which perform functions necessary to life. All of these are connected by a central nerve system. All members of the physical body are under the directive of the head as messages are sent through out this communication system. Additionally, all members of the body are in sympathy with one another and do only those things which promote good health for the whole body.

It there was one area of the body that was suffering from infection the body would produce blood cells necessary to combat the infection to the saving of the body. Also, if one were to suffer from a sprained or broken ankle, the rest of the body would immediately do all that was necessary to relieve that organ of its ordinary work taking the extra burden and distributing it among other members. Likewise, this is to be the attitude of the members of the body of Christ. Every member of Christ’s body is important (I Corinthians 12:12-23) and each has a particular function (I Corinthians 12:14-19). When one member of the body suffers all are to come to the aid of that member (I Corinthians 5:1-2; 12:24-27; Romans 12:15).

In addition to this there should be seen among the body of Christ unity among its members. If man determined to move in a northward direction and his right leg began in that direction the left foot would naturally follow. For the left foot to travel in the opposite direction would be working against both its fellow members and rejecting the command of its head. Both the Bible and common sense necessitates the unity among members of the physical body (I Corinthians 12:12-25). This is the same among the members of the spiritual body of Christ. Just as there is unity between the Father and the Son (John 17:21-23) there is to be unity among the members of the body (Romans 12:4-5). Paul instructed the Corinthians that divisions among the body was sin. *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (I Corinthians 1:10). Paul further indicated that when such condition exists within the body men begin to wear names of men (I Corinthians 1:12) and to teach the doctrines of men (Galatians 1:6ff).

The denominations do not fit the divine picture of the church of Christ as a body. It is impossible to harmonize 300+ denominational bodies all teaching different doctrines with one head that teaches one thing **not** confusion (I Corinthians 14:33). As members the body of Christ we must be ever mindful of our relation to the head and submit to His will. Furthermore, we must always strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

-Ronnie Scherffius

THE BOOK OF NUMBERINGS

The fourth book in the canon of Holy Scripture gets its name from the two significant events that occurred according to God's purpose for the immediate future. Now as Israel has received the law, it is within the mind of God to lead them to the border of Canaan and in to victory and conquest of that land promised unto Abraham long ago. But for the purposes of battle it was God's intention to obtain a census of those among the people who would fit the qualifications of being fighting men. In this book there are two of these censuses and from them it bears the name "Numbers."

Numbers 1:1 opens exactly one month from the day in which the tabernacle was set up (see Exodus 40:17) and the nation is still in the wilderness of Sinai. It follows with a section of scripture that continues in the sequence began in Genesis. "As Genesis is the book of election, Exodus the book of redemption, and Leviticus the book of worship and communion, Numbers is the book of the service and walk of God's redeemed people" (Unger). However, sadly wherein Numbers began as a hopeful book with great anticipation for what would come for the children of God, it ends with sad conclusions based on bad decisions both by the nation and by their fearless leader, Moses.

It is interesting to know that Numbers records the history of two different generations, and the book is divided quite evenly between the two. Chapters 1-19 deal with the same generation (people ages 20 and up) that came out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses; and chapters 20-36 record the history of their children who survived the period of wilderness wanderings. It was in Numbers 13 that twelve spies, one from each tribe, were sent into Canaan for a period of forty days to search the land out and bring a report back before the armies moved in to invade. However, though explicitly commanded by God to go in and earnestly urged by the God-fearing to do the same, the majority came back fearful and afraid saying that it was impossible for them to overcome the dwellers of Canaan. Based on their assessment the people refused to obey the command of God, and for that disobedience they were told that they of that first generation (all ages 20 and up) would die in the wilderness during a forty-year period of wandering, never reaching Canaan (Numbers 14:29-34). That they did, until every last single person died as promised, evident from Numbers 20:3.

However it is at this point that the nation of Israel received a new lease on life, as they then would be the heirs of Canaan, which they would obtain and inhabit. The remainder of Numbers records various events that took place as Israel traveled in route to Canaan's border where eventually Joshua would lead them in, but its an event in Numbers 20 that defines the future of the nation and her leadership. In Exodus 17 the people had found themselves athirst and in desperate need of water in order to survive. At this time God gave Moses the command to strike with his rod the rock in Horeb (which would have been the side of a mountain) and water would come forth in abundance; providing enough for the people and their animals. It was successful inasmuch as God had promised it and ensured its happening. However it was in Numbers 20 that again the people, this time the second generation, found themselves athirst and in desperate need of water. Again Moses sought the blessing of the Lord on behalf of the people and this time Moses was told to take his rod and speak to the rock in Meribah and water would flow forth. But, out of great anger and annoyance toward the people he smote the rock with his rod twice, bringing forth water but disobeying the command of God. Because of his disobedience Moses was told by God that he would live long enough to see Canaan, but would never set foot in it (Numbers 20:12), meaning Israel would have to enter the treacherous soil of this foreign land without the leader they had known and loved so long.

It is in this section of scripture where Christ is pictured. As Paul declared of ancient Israel in I Corinthians 10:4, "*And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*" Wherein Christ was the Rock from which the people drank there was significance in that He was to be smitten only once then as He would be smitten only once when He came incarnate (Hebrews 10:10). Moses was to smite the rock only once and Christ, the Rock, would be smitten only once. By smiting the rock twice, Moses broke the type God had intended, thus had to be punished. However, Christ is still that Rock from which man can enjoy the refreshing water of life which if he drinks, never has to thirst again (John 4:13).

Numbers, though a record of important history, has many lasting principles that are alive and effective today in the Christian's walk of life. May we today be numbered among God's spiritual army as those of long ago were numbered among His spiritual army.

-Andy Brewer