

# 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 FAMILY: THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD-

The Bible clearly instructs that the salvation of our souls is located within something. Just as salvation from the global flood was located in the ark of Noah (Genesis 6-8) our salvation is located within the church of Christ (II Timothy 2:10; Acts 2:47). Since our salvation is located within the church of Christ, and since there are so many manmade denominational churches that exist within this world that claim to be the way to salvation, it is of great necessity to be able to recognize the church of which Christ is the Savior (Ephesians 5:23).

One can easily determine who a person is by the distinguishing characteristics of that person. If a child was lost in a mall of a large city the police would search for him based on his physical appearance **and** "special features" that are *unique to that child*. Suppose that this child was a boy 4 1/2 feet tall, had blond hair and blue eyes, wore glasses, and had a birthmark behind his left ear, and was wearing white shoes, blue jeans, and a red shirt. Now, suppose that ten boys were found that matched the description of the missing child by 95-99%. Would the mother be satisfied with a child that was "almost" hers or would she search until she found her child?

This is the situation that one finds himself in when trying to find the church of Christ. There are many institutions produced by men that possess many of the characteristics and traits of the church, but unless a church possesses **all** of these it is not the "called out" body of Christ; it is not the "kingdom" over which Christ is the king; it is not the body over which Christ is the head.

### ***THE CHURCH OF CHRIST—A FAMILY***

Another characteristic of the church of Christ is that it is a family. The Bible often speaks of Christians as "children" and of the church as a "house." All of these clearly indicate that the church of Christ is a family. Furthermore, the New Testament writers often refer to other Christians as "brother" or "sister," terms indicating the familial relationship of the church. Still, exactly whose children are we? To whose family do we belong? Of what household are we members? The answers to these questions help us better to see another part of the nature of the church and that is, as to a family the church is the household of God.

### ***AS TO FAMILY—THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD***

All who are members of the church of Christ are members of the household of God. Paul referred to the church as the Lord's house. "*But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God...*" (I Timothy 3:15). The church being the house of God indicates that God dwells among His people in His house (Genesis 28:16; I Corinthians 3:16). Being in the household of God also implies a closeness that is not found outside of the family of God. Paul speaks of this in writing to the church at Ephesus, "*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*" (2:19). Strangers and foreigners are those who live without a covenant relationship with God and are separated from the blessings found in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). To be "fellow-citizens" is to be recognized as possessing the same rights and privileges as others in God's house.

John further demonstrates this relationship and the great love that God has for many by providing entrance into His house and allowing us to be adopted into His family. "*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God...*" (I John 3:1). John 3:16 demonstrates the *measure* of love that God has for us, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...*" All who take advantage of God's love and access His grace through obedience to His will become Christians and are added to the church of Christ. The *manner*, or

**WHAT'S ALL THIS COMMOTION ABOUT EMOTION? AM**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

- I. \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ wept
  - B. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ wept
  - C. \_\_\_\_\_ wept
  - D. \_\_\_\_\_ wept
  - E. \_\_\_\_\_ wept
  - F. \_\_\_\_\_ wept
- II. When \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. He \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. He \_\_\_\_\_
- III. What \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. It can mean \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. It can bring \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. It can decide \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_

“When I was a youngster,” complained the frustrated father, shaking his head, “I was disciplined by being sent to my room without supper. But our son has his own color TV, phone, computer, and CD player.”

“So what do you do when your son misbehaves?” asked his friend,

“I send him to **our** room!”

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A famous football coach was on vacation with his family in Maine. When they walked into a movie theater and sat down, the handful of people applauded. He thought to himself, “I can’t believe it. People recognize me all the way up here.”

Then a man came over to him and said, “Thanks for coming. They won’t start the movie for less than ten people.”

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One park ranger asked another, “What do we do if we see an endangered animal eating an endangered plant?”

way, that God loves Christians, or members of the church of Christ, is displayed in that when we are added to the church we are adopted as children into the family of God. In this house we have one Father, the God of heaven (Ephesians 1:6), and Christ, as builder of the house (the church) is over the house (Hebrews 3:6).

Even as one is a member of a physical family by birth into that family, only by being *born again* can one become a child of God. Jesus indicated this truth to Nicodemus stating, “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3). The kingdom of God, the church, and the family or household of God refer to the same institution. Only by being born into this family may one enjoy the benefits of it. Jesus, in answering the difficulties Nicodemus concerning a man being “*born again*” declared, “*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*” (John 3:5). The religious world is greatly confused as to this new birth. Many believe that there are two births, one of water and another with the Holy Spirit, as on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). However, Jesus never mentioned two births, but one! There are not two births, but two elements pertaining to the one birth! To be *born of water and of the Spirit* is simply to be born of water according to the teaching of the Spirit. Paul affirms this in writing to the Ephesians stating that Jesus sanctified and cleansed the church “*with the washing of water by the word*” (Ephesians 5:26), i.e., baptism according to the gospel of Christ which was revealed by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:1ff).

Finally, just as there is a family name among men in their physical families, there is a name given by God to His children. The name we wear indicates to which family we belong. Many in the religious world wear names of men or of institutions founded by men and their doctrines, thus indicating that they are not of God’s family but of another. A family that has no heavenly Father nor Savior who died for it. God’s children, however, wear a name by which He has called them and that name is Christian (Isaiah 62:1-2; Acts 11:26). It is for this cause and in this name that we are to live and suffer for the cause of Christ and it is the “worthy name” that all who reject the gospel blaspheme (James 2:7).

All Christians are children of God and become children through obedience to the faith revealed by the Spirit of God to the apostles and inspired men (Galatians 3:26-27; Romans 8:14-16; Ephesians 3:1-5; Jude 3). As children we are sons (Galatians 4:6-7) and as sons we are heirs of the inheritance according to the promise of God to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:28-29). Are you a child of God? Are you a citizen of the household of God?

**“AND THEY SUNG AS IT WERE A NEW SONG”**

In the midst of John’s apocalyptic revelation, in which the saints of God are pictured victorious against the defeated forces of Satan, John recorded, “*And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth*” (Revelation 14:1-3). John is now looking forward in time to the day in which the complete number of God’s elect will stand in joyful awe of the beautiful land prepared and promised by Christ, and says that they sing a new song. To children of God this recorded vision is a passage that inspires comfort, hope, and anticipation to the glory that awaits them when the setting sun fades the shadows of this life and they are able to cross the bar of death into that vast eternity. But why?

Singing has always been an active form of showing praise, joy, admiration, or celebration. The first occurrence of singing found in the Bible is in Exodus 15:1ff when after the Israelites had been delivered from the Egyptians’ pursuit through the Red Sea, Moses lead the children of Israel in a song of praise unto God and celebration of deliverance and triumph. After this first occurrence, singing became a common form of expression throughout the Old Testament and New Testament, both in ancient and modern history. Today it has been formally preserved by God as an act of worship (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), but is used in various means in secular society for the similar purpose of rendering joy or celebration for something or someone. The Christians’ songs of worship are written and sung with the intent of rendering praise, worship, and glory unto God; celebrating spiritual victory through blood-bought redemption; and inspiring disobedient man to hearken and heed the will of Almighty God. However, wherein singing as worship is clearly set forth in scripture to have these purposes today, the Bible likewise looks forward to eternity in indicating what role singing will hold at that time.

In the given text above, John looks and sees the Lamb (Jesus Christ) standing on the mount of Zion (figurative description of heaven). With the Christ in heaven are 144,000 with the Father’s name inscribed in their foreheads. This is not a literal number with a literal inscription as everything John has and will write are signified (written in signs—Revelation 1:1). But, rather what is pictured is the complete number ( $12 \times 12 \times 1000 = 144,000$ ) of God’s elect who have been marked as being identified with God; or in other words all faithful Christians. John then hears a joyful noise of angelic harmony ringing forth from the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, and these redeemed and saved Christians are singing before the throne of God a new song. However, what new song could be sung and of what could they be singing?

Currently, children of God sing about salvation in promise, because it has not yet been fulfilled in heaven. But in that day it will be, and it will truly be the grandest theme ever sung because it will not be “our God is able to deliver thee” but rather “our God has delivered thee.” Wherein in this life the Christian’s new song is regarding redemption, in eternity it will be regarding the truly new and never old salvation in the bosom of the Father. It will be around His throne that the saints of all ages will be gathered, it will be there that a unified voice with the angelic host will lift in adoration unto God such as never heard before, and it will be there where the song shall never end for there is no night there (Revelation 22:5).

Such a beautiful thought as revealed by John has today been put to song, and waiting in hope we sing:

“It thrills my soul to hear the songs of praise, We mortals sing below,  
And though it takes the parting of the ways, Yet I must outward go;  
I hope to hear throughout unnumbered days, The song earth cannot know,  
They sing in heav’n a new song, Of Moses and the Lamb.”

Yes, there shall in that sweet by and by be sung a new song, one never sung before. But what sadness in the very pit of our souls to think we might not be there to join in. You see, “*no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth*” (Revelation 14:3). Prepare yourself now for the grandest chorus ever sung, that which shall be in heaven in that eternal day. Give yourself the blessed assurance that comes with the Christian’s hope. Be able to sing it then because you can sing it now. Do it by being the obedient recipient of God’s mercy and God’s grace.

-Andy Brewer