

The BEACON

Published by the Newton church of Christ
Meeting at: St. James Church St and Glendale Rd

Vol. 25, No. 4

Edited by John Cripps

April, 2011



THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT - Part Two

By - Bobby L. Graham

What Jesus Built

In studying what Jesus promised and built, we learn that God's people composed the church.

The people that He had so long sought through Old Testament times and arrangements were now built upon the foundation that He himself had laid. Different figures used in the New Testament teach us what Jesus built.

From the standpoint of their loyalty to God, His people were the family of God, made up of spiritual children (**1 Tim. 3:15**). From the viewpoint of their privileges and responsibilities under the reign of Christ, they are citizens in the spiritual kingdom (**Col. 1:13**). As people married to Christ and demonstrating their allegiance to Him, they are His bride (**2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-32**). In their relation to Christ as master and teacher, those in the church are disciples and Christians (**Acts 11:26**). In their connection with each other, they sometimes are portrayed as members of a body headed by Christ (**Eph. 1:23**). While it is not the body of **Ephesians 1:23**, even in a local-church context the members are compared to a physical body (**1 Cor. 12:12-27**). As those empowered to serve and worship God for themselves, apart from human mediation, Christians are priests in the

holy priesthood (**1 Pet. 2:5**). The makeup of the Lord's church is easily learned by such a comparison with these figures, for they all convey helpful information about God's people, built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. In other words, we see in all such figures/illustrations the connection of the church to the very foundation laid by the Lord, for all of them depend on the acceptance of Jesus' divine messiahship. Only when people hear God's prophet, bow before the reigning king, and are cleansed by the high priest's atoning work can they become part of the church or enter any of the parallel relationships mentioned in this paragraph.

What Jesus did on Pentecost in beginning the church, He continues to do by the same means of gospel preaching and obedience on the part of individuals (**1 Pet. 2:5**). The work of redemption, finalized in Christ's work, must be applied to individuals through the work of preaching the gospel. As long as people are responding in faith to the gospel, living stones "are being built" into the spiritual house (NKJB rendering of Peter's verse). The spiritual house begun on that memorable Pentecost is an unfinished work, because the Lord's delay of His coming mean more souls can be saved (**2 Pet. 3:15**).

It reasonably follows the preceding line of thought that those built by Christ into His church would designated as His people. Whatever the Lord called them is what they ought to call themselves. Earlier parallel relationships teach us what the Lord sometimes called His people. No formal (proper) name is there found that must be always employed to the exclusion of the other names. Brethren insisting on one such name ought to face this reality. Brethren seeking to escape association with the teaching/practice mandated by Christ, by avoidance of some name found in the New Testament, ought also to face this reality.

Government of the Church

When Jesus spoke of the kingdom of heaven, He alluded to that which had brought Him to earth and which both He and His predecessor John had announced as being near. "Kingdom" often conveys its basic meaning of reign or dominion, but here Jesus most likely referred to the church as being interchangeable with the kingdom (an extended meaning referring to those over whom Jesus rules-that is, who have accepted His rule). Jesus began His reign upon His return to heaven and later began the church when Peter used the keys of the kingdom to open the church to human beings. The government of the Lord's church is that of a kingdom, because Christ is king over this spiritual realm.

Lee Woodward, a close friend and fellow-teacher, frequently told his new classes at the beginning of the school year that his classroom was not a democracy, but a dictatorship. He simply meant that he was the one in charge in the classroom, not that he

ruled as a tyrant. All need to understand that Jesus is in charge in the church. The church is not governed by an oligarchy, a democracy, or an aristocracy. Neither the majority nor the minority rules the church; Jesus does! He is king, raised from the dead and exalted to His position by God the Father (**Acts 13:32-39**). Those in His church have willingly accepted His rule. For this reason no member of any congregation should act as if he rules the church. No one has the right to usurp the kingly role of Christ, who along enjoys the approval of heaven in His role.

In the New Testament the kingship of Jesus is equated with His role as Lord (**Acts 2:36**) and head of the church (**Eph. 5:23**). In all three of these varied expressions-king, head, and Lord, the central idea is that of His authority. The idea of a king stresses His rule over His people. The image of a head emphasizes His control of the members of His body. The word "Lord" focuses on His position as master over His servants. One cannot be in the church apart from surrendering his own will to that of Christ. The same divine authority that conducts one into the church is also operative in the church for both individual and collective action. It is imperative that all belonging to Christ understand the authority of Christ over them in both connections. Whatever decisions one makes or a local church makes ought to be made in view of the teaching of Christ and His apostles. He is in charge! There is no room in the body of Christ for members who seek to control the head or other members, or for servants who seek to become masters, or for citizens who rise up in rebellion against their king to "boss" the other citizens or their king.

Inherent in Christ's plan for His people in local churches is the role of a plurality of elders, but they must not act as lords over God's heritage (**1 Pet. 5:3**). As examples and wise spiritual leaders, they "stand before" the sheep to show them the way and to teach them to follow. In their oversight there are judgment decisions that they must make, but even here they should consider the needs, wishes, and welfare of the church, not their own selfish desires. In this respect they submit first to Christ and then to their fellow-Christians. Elders are not a part of the government in the sense that Jesus is, for they share no legislative power with Him. They do, however, occupy a very important role in the functioning of a local church.

The Law of the Church

After indicating the kingdom aspect of the church, Jesus then spoke of the work of His apostles in binding and loosing. In this expression He referred to the giving of divine law for the welfare of His people. The apostles would serve in very significant positions in this matter, as the Lord showed in His picture of them on thrones during the time of regeneration (being born again) in **Matthew 19:28**. The authoritative quality of their teaching is here underscored, even as it is in a passage like **Acts 2:42**, where their teaching was the guide of the early Christians.

Jesus did not mean that they would initiate law, but announce what heaven had decreed. That such is His meaning can be seen in the language employed: "whatever you bind on earth shall be, having been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be, having been loosed in heaven" (Marshall's

interlinear translation of the Nestle text). Observe that their role as apostles in binding and loosing did not come first, but after heaven's decree. If such were the case, then God's eternal plan would be subject to apostolic interpretation, but the opposite is the case. Peter, the apostle here addressed, and the other ones, as seen in **Matthew 18:18**, shared in the work of binding and loosing. There was no primacy for Peter or any other apostle, in spite of Catholic doctrine to the contrary! The privilege in the work of revelation granted to Peter in **Matthew 16** was likewise given to the rest two chapters later.

In a practical sense, what does this concept mean to the church today? It places all in the church under authority to Christ in relation to apostolic teaching. What they taught was theirs by divine inspiration, as part of the process of revelation. Jesus made arrangement for the coming of the Spirit of truth to guide them, as earlier seen in this study. When they thus spoke, they were presenting the words of Christ, whether He personally spoke them while on earth or not. Because of this understanding, we then would make no difference between the words of Christ in red letters in some New Testaments and those of Christ in black, given to the apostles for delivery to earth. In fact, the entire New Testament could easily be printed in red letters for this reason.

This concept also means that the law of Christ relative to all matters addressed in the New Testament must be our authoritative guide. The following aspects of Christ's plan illustrate the application of that plan to the church today:

1. **Law of Entrance:** The teaching of Jesus and His apostles relative to becoming Christians is not merely suggestive that we should think along these broad lines, but they constitute the way of passage into the kingdom of God. It is clearly the way of faith in Christ, repentance over sins, and baptism into Christ for the forgiveness of one's sins (**Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:46-47; Acts 2:38**). Only those who conform themselves to the will of the Father will thus enter the kingdom (**Mt. 7:21**). That this became divine law is seen in the uniform expectations of those who turned to Christ in the cases of conversion in the Book of Acts.

2. **Law of Worship:** What Jesus taught concerning collective worship in **John 4:24** was later expanded in the various statements of Acts and the epistles (**Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11; 14; Col. 3:16**). Worship is not acceptable merely because of some attitude that the worshipper has; God has always prescribed acceptable worship.

3. **Law of Organization:** The New Testament pictures local-church organization and nothing more (**Phil. 1:2; Acts 20:28; Tit. 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1-4**). The current practice of joining local churches together to work in different fields is unknown in the New Testament. Local churches always operated under local elders to do their work.

4. **Law of Mission (Work):** The mission of Christ to seek and save the lost became the passion of His people, as seen in the examples of congregations dispatching preachers to preach and supporting preachers ay home and at a distance. Local churches also edified saints to spiritual maturity and sometimes assisted with emergency needs

among the saints. Modern concern with health projects, educational ventures, recreational programs, and social-action efforts is totally alien to the portrait found in the Scriptures.

5. **Law of Life:** Each Christian is individually related to Christ as his king and head. Matters of attitude, speech, and act come within this relationship. All that one does and is must conform to the example of Christ

The purpose of this brief presentation in this last section is not to provide exhaustive teaching/scriptures concerning these different matters of Christ's law, but to illustrate how His law applies in various areas. It is clear that the local church (points 2-4) and the individual Christian (points 1 and 5) must submit to the will of the king. All purchased by His blood belong to Him and should glorify Him through lives of obedient service. In this way the church built by Jesus Christ will serve as His spiritual body to represent Him to the world.

REVERENDFUN.COM COPYRIGHT GCI, INC.



Thanks to Dan

12-03-2007

ANOTHER ESKIMO BAPTISM GONE BAD