

TITLE: THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

TEXT: MATTHEW 16:18

THESIS: There are many churches to choose from today. Which is right? Are all OK? What are the distinguishing characteristics of the Lord's church that will help us in answering these questions?

INTRO: Last Sunday during my visit to Japan, we ate lunch at McDonald's. I wondered, as I ordered my usual Quarter Pounder w/ Cheese and fries, am I going to get what I'm expecting? After all, I'm used to what these things look and taste like where I live. But what about here in Japan (or OK, TX, MA)? Of course, it *did* taste the same? Why? Coincidence? Because they use the *same recipe*!

Does it matter though? Can't each McDonald's franchise just do whatever they want? Yes, but then it wouldn't truly be a "McDonald's." **It's the same with the church.** If someone is looking for a church, he has several options (denominations, Catholic, etc.). But, the Church of Christ is NOT a denomination. The church is different than any other religious group. But isn't one just as good as another ("go to the church of your choice")?

I. VALUE OF THE CHURCH:

- A. Some say, "Don't preach the church, just preach Jesus!"
- B. How much is anything *worth*?
 - 1. Basic economics – something is worth what someone will pay for it (e.g., a house).
 - 2. If you paid \$10,000 for a diamond ring, how much would you expect it to be valued at? At least \$10,000! Why? Because something is worth what you paid for it!
- C. What is the church worth? **Acts 20:28** – Jesus purchased the church with his own blood! Therefore, *the church is worth Christ's blood!* Do NOT say that the church doesn't matter! It DOES matter...so much that Christ *died* for it. So let's talk about a few characteristics that matter!

II. NAME OF THE CHURCH:

- A. The religious world will tell us that the name doesn't matter.
- B. But names certainly matter to God
 - 1. (Abram-Abraham; Jacob-Israel, John, Jesus)
 - 2. **Acts 4:12** – "Salvation is in no other; no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."
- C. The church is the *bride of Christ* (2 Cor 11:2). Men, do you care whose last name your bride takes?
- D. **Individual name:** Christian (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet 4:16 – suffering as a Christian)
There are no hyphenated Christians in the Bible (they weren't Baptist-Christians, etc.)
- E. **Church name:** Church of God; Church of Christ, etc. (Biblical names)
Rom 16:16 – shows what the congregations were called ("churches of Christ")
Mt 16:18 – "...I will build **my church**."
 - 1. Founder - *Christ* will build it (no one else; not M. Luther, J. Calvin, Wesley, A. Campbell)
Psalm 127:1 – "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."
Mt 15:13 – "Every tree not planted by my Heavenly Father will be uprooted."
 - 2. Possession – "**my** church" – it belongs to Christ
 - 3. Singularity – "**my church**", not "**my churches**"
No wonder Paul could say in **1 Cor 1:10f**, "I beseech you...that there be no divisions among you, that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."
The church was to be ONE, not divided into multiple groups following multiple men!
 - 4. Whose name should it wear? **Christ's** (Rom 16:16), just as we as members wear only His name ("Christian").
- F. But the name is not all that matters. What if the name is right (church, church of God, etc.), but the practices are wrong?

III. WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH:

- A. Our worship is definitely a characteristic that distinguishes the Lord's church from others claiming to be Christians.
- B. **John 4:23-24** – We must worship in *spirit* and in *truth*. True worshipers are those who worship in spirit and truth.
 - 1. Spirit – God is spirit. He is not limited to a location (mountain, temple, etc.). We can *and should* worship Him *anywhere*. We don't *need* a building. The true location of worship is in your heart. It is meaningful, sincere.
 - 2. Truth – John 17:17 – thy word is truth. We must worship according to his word.
Without His word, how would we know *how* to worship at all?
2 Pet 1:3 – He has clearly given us *everything we need* for worship! God has told us how he wants us to worship Him.

IV. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH:

- A. We speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent.
2 Tim 3:16-17 – The scriptures thoroughly furnish the man of God unto *every* good work.
- B. Plan of Salvation – if someone asks how to obey the gospel, there should only be one response in regards to HOW:
1. He must hear (Rom 10:17)
 2. He must believe (John 3:16; 8:24, et. al.)
 3. He must repent (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30)
 4. He must confess (Matt 10:32-33; Rom 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)
 5. He must be baptized (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-6; 1 Pet 3:21; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12, 3:1)

CONCLUSION: Many members of the church have taken the attitude that we can't know any of these things for sure. But as we've seen in the scriptures, WE CAN KNOW! And we are responsible for living faithful in these things and teaching others these things!