

THINGS I WISH PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD ABOUT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Part 1

There are a lot of people who have no idea what the church of Christ is like, but there are plenty of people who are confused about what we stand for and what we teach. I would like to talk about a few of these things that I wish people understood about the church of Christ. These things I am going to talk about are in no particular order.

Many today seem to think that the church of Christ is just another denomination mixed in with the over 30,000 that are in existence today. No doubt, the devil has done a great job at causing confusion because finding the truth among 30,000 different groups is like finding an eyelash on black carpet. However, if one looks for the truth, I believe they can find it as Jesus said:

Jn. 8:31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Jesus tells us the way that we can know the truth that will set us free is by abiding in His Word. This means, we have to ignore what man says, and we focus on what God's Word says about salvation and life. I want you to notice this simple yet powerful argument.

Heb. 11:6 But without faith *it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

In Hebrew 11, we learn about all kinds of faithful men and women who trusted in God and followed His commands. It follows that if we want to be pleasing to God, then we too must be faithful to God and His commands. Paul tells us exactly where faith comes from in:

Rom. 10:17 So then faith *comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

So, if we want to be pleasing to God, we must do things His way. Our faith and the things we do must be found within God's Word. As Paul told Timothy:

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture *is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,* ¹⁷ *that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Jesus certainly emphasizes this principle in:

Matthew 15:1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ² "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." ³ He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? ⁴ "For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'¹; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'² ⁵ "But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother,

"Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"-- 6` then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. 7 "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 8` These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

These Jews had created traditions that they had turned into laws and in some case they held their traditions above the law of God. Man loves to do this, which is why we have over 30,000 denominations today. It all has to do with people who didn't like a particular teaching or they came up with their own traditions they wanted others to follow, and thus a denomination is born.

However, when it comes to the church of Christ, we are people who believe that the New Testament is our authority. We do our best to ignore opinion or what we feel is right or wrong within our hearts, and we allow the Word of God to be our guide. We completely agree with what Solomon wrote many years ago:

Prov. 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct¹ your paths.

Or as Paul wrote:

1 Cor. 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

It certainly is not easy to set aside your feelings, opinions, or traditions that develop over the years, but our goal is to be a reflection of the church you read about in the New Testament. Since we rely on the Word of God for the things we do and teach, we can firmly say there is only one church, which means that denomination are not the true church because they are a division that have their own ideas and manmade traditions.

It is easy to say this, but let's prove it from the Word of God.

Matt. 16:15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Jesus is talking to His disciples about who people think Jesus is, then He asked them who do you think I am. This is where we see Peter's great confession of Jesus being the Son of God, but notice in verse 18, Jesus said that He would build My church. This is in the singular and this same idea is taught throughout the N.T.

Eph. 1:22 And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

There is just one Jesus and He is the head over the church, singular, which is also called His body. When you think about this image, do you think about a one headed Jesus with 30,000 different bodies that are doing their own thing? Of course, not. There is one head and one body.

Paul wrote:

Eph. 4:4 *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

No one argues and says there are multitude of Fathers, and we shouldn't argue that there are a multitude of bodies because there is just one.

1 Cor. 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many.

Rom. 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Every Christians makes up the one body/church the Jesus purchased with His blood. Many more Scriptures can be given that repeats this fundamental lesson that there is one church/body. Some might think that all denominations belong to the one body even though they call themselves after other men or practices. They don't seem to think that it really matters if they do things there way, but Paul condemns such behavior in:

1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's *household*, that there are contentions among you. ¹² Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Paul was a man who expressed his concern for the churches over and over again. In fact, we learn from Acts 20 that he even shed tears over his concerns for the church at Ephesus that they would remain true to God. In our immediate text, we see that the Corinthians had started calling themselves after mere men. This is why we see Paul pleading with all his being that they not be divided or call themselves after men because there was only one man who died for them and that

man was Jesus. It is not possible to have spiritual unity without Jesus being our head, so Paul forbids division in these scriptures.

When allow ourselves to be divided in different religious groups, worshiping in different ways, and calling ourselves by different names, all we are doing is causing confusion and we all know that God is not author of confusion. So, it is imperative as Christians today that we don't accept denominationalism because God doesn't want his people to be divided.

The only way that we can truly be united with God and with each other is by allowing God's word and His word only to be our guide. If we add or take away from his authority we will not be in unity with Him, which is our first priority. People can be in unity with themselves all day long like the people who were building the tower of Babble, but they found out that having unity with each other, but not with God does not work, and it will not make you right with God.

So, this means that we should not be in open fellowship spiritually with those who choose to divide themselves from God's pattern of worship. Now, I am not talking about ceasing from reaching out to the religious world, but we should not be sharing our pulpits with them or doing things that imply that we agree with their additions or subtractions from God's Word.

When people in the church of Christ start talking like this, some get offended and start calling us names and saying the we are being too harsh, but we are not. We are simply teaching what the Bible teaches. I would have to say to those who think we are mean spirited and exclusive the same thing that Paul said:

Gal. 4:16 Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

If you belong to a denomination, do a little bit of research and you will find that your denomination was created somewhere between the 1500s and now. Even the Catholic church did not officially begin until A.D. 325. However, the church that Christ built was prophesied about in:

Isa. 2:2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days *That* the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. ³ Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Verse 2 is a prophecy of the church and it has several elements to it:

1. It would happen at a certain time "latter days."
2. It would be built at a location "established on the top of the mountains."
3. It would be exalted above others "exalted above the hills."
4. It would involve all nations "all nations shall flow to it."

This same prophecy is repeated by Micah in Micah 4:1-3. The “latter days” would be some time in the future. Joel also tells us what will happen when these events happen in Isaiah.

Joel 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days..

Daniel also talks about the latter days as well:

Daniel 2:28 "But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these:

Daniel goes on to describe the future empires based on the image the king had saw in verses 31-34.

Head of gold – King Nebuchadnezzar

Breast and arms of silver– Medo-Persians

The belly and thighs of brass – Greece

Legs of Iron and feet of iron mixed with clay – Roman Empire (63 BC – 476AD)

In Verse 44, Daniel tells of an everlasting kingdom (the church) that would be set up during the 4th kingdom, which was the Roman Empire:

Daniel 2:44 "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

All of the prophecies about “latter days”, “those days”, and those things that take place “afterward” all point to the great event that happened on the day of Pentecost during the Roman Empire. Peter specifically tells us when Joel’s prophecy was being fulfilled:

Acts 2:14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵ "For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

By Peter stating that Joel’s prophecy was being fulfilled means that all other prophecies that had to do with the Messiah and His kingdom were also being fulfilled. The reign of Christ would be in the “latter days’ and His reign would never be succeeded by anyone else. There will be no

other age or dispensation of time. There is an easy way to remember this. The prophecies of Isaiah 2, Joel 2, and Daniel 2 were fulfilled in Acts 2.

Isaiah also said in verse 3:

For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

This verse is saying the same thing since the Word of God is His law. His word/law would go forth from Jerusalem because that is where it first began to be revealed in Acts 2. Notice what Jesus told His disciples in:

Luke 24:46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Notice what Jesus tells His disciples shortly before His accession to heaven:

Acts 1:4 And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me; ⁵ "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." ⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸ "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Jesus makes it easy for us to see that this new law was not the same law of the O.T. but it was something different and it would have its beginning at Jerusalem, and then it would go forth from there to all places and all nations. This would also fulfill the prophecy of Jeremiah who said:

Jeremiah 31:31 " Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- ³² "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. ³³ "But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

So this new law and its teachings would happen at the establishment of the kingdom/church that would begin at Jerusalem in A.D. 30. So, the church singular that Jesus bought and paid for with

His blood is the church/body/kingdom that we read about in the New Testament. It is the church that we must belong to in order to be saved. As Paul said.

Eph. 5:23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

I am going to have to wait to give you more details of the things that I wish others understood about the church of Christ, but I want to point out one quick fact from Scripture. I have been talking a lot about there only being one body and that we must be part of that body in order to be saved. Most of those in denominations have adapted a false view of salvation. Now most of them understand the concept that without God's grace, we cannot be saved. Most of them understand that we salvation only comes through Jesus and He is the only one who has made salvation possible for us at all, but the teachings of dominations go in all kinds of different directions after this. Some teach that you're saved by faith alone or grace alone. Some say you have to say a sinners' prayer or ask Jesus into your heart even though this idea is not found anywhere in Scripture.

Since the church of Christ believes that God's Word should be our guide, let's notice what it says about salvation.

It says we must hear the word of God:

Rom. 10:17 So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Jas. 1:21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

So, must hear God's Word and receive it because it contains the Words of life.

We must believe in Jesus:

Jn. 8:24 "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins."

We must repent:

Lk. 13:3 "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

We must confess Jesus as Lord:

Matt. 10:32 "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ "But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

We must be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins:

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Once our sins have been forgiven, we are to remain faithful to the Lord until we die:

Rev. 2:10 Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

One thing that most of denominations teach is that baptism not necessary for salvation even though Peter said it is forgiveness of sins. That's like telling someone they don't need to eat or drink to live, which we know is not true. Besides this, the Bible also teaches us that baptism is the point that we are added to the church. We can see this several ways. First, if you drop down to verse 47 in Acts 2, you will see that it was God that add those who were baptized into the church.

Acts 2:47 And the Lord added to the church¹ daily those who were being saved.

Also, compare the following verses:

Jn. 3:5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

1 Cor. 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-

Notice, that Jesus and Paul both are talking about how one gets into the body and kingdom, which is church. Jesus tells us this happens by being born of water and the Spirit, and Paul says by one Spirit we are baptized into the one body. So, as the Holy Spirit instructs us through His sword, which is the Word of God, we see that when we are baptized in water, we are added to the one church by God. We can see this again by how the Bible says we get into Christ.

Gal. 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Rom. 6:3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

When you think about the imagery that Paul talks about in Romans 6 about baptism, it becomes clear that water baptism fits perfectly with this idea of being born again because Paul teaches us that at our baptism we are being buried with Christ and our old man is dying, and then we are be raised up as a new creature in Christ with our sins forgiven. So, not only do the Scriptures teach that baptism is the point our sins are forgiven, it is the point that we are added to the church you read about in the N.T.

There is nothing wrong with telling people this because this is what the Scripture teach, and the Scriptures are what we must go by in order find the truth and come out of denominationalism and be unified with God.

We in the church of Christ simply want the truth taught, and we want people to become Christians as the Bible teaches. We want Christians to be unified with God and each other based

on God's Word. I have much more to say about all of this, but I will close this lesson with part of the Lord's prayer for us to think on.

John 17:14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸ "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. ²⁰ " I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ "that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: ²³ "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. ²⁴ "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ "O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. ²⁶ "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare *it*, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

THINGS I WISH PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD ABOUT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Part 2

In our last lesson, we began looking at some of the things I wished people understood about the church of Christ. I want to refresh your memory on what we covered. I talked about how many people today seem to think that the church of Christ is another denomination midst the 30,000 plus denominations that are out there. I began to point out how we can find the truth about the church, which is by going to the Bible and not by man's opinion or what they feel is right in their heart of hearts. I showed how the Scriptures teach that there is just one church, which is also called the kingdom and the body. I showed how the Scriptures teach that we are not supposed to divide ourselves and call ourselves after other names because Jesus is the one who died for us. I also showed how the one church that the New Testament talks about began on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and was prophesied about in Isaiah 2, Dan. 2 and Micah 2. Peter confirmed the fulfillment of these prophecies in Acts 2. So the church/kingdom/body of Christ had its start in A.D. 30.

I then gave Scripture to show how we can become part of that one church that Jesus purchased with His blood, which is by obeying God's plan of salvation which is by hearing, believing, repenting, confessing and be baptized. I also showed that one is not put into Christ or added to the church by God until they are baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.

Then I closed the sermon by reading part of our Lord's prayer in John 17 in which He wants His disciples and future disciples to be one like He and the Father are one, which stresses the point once again that we should not have denominations today, but instead we should all be part of the one church Jesus is the head of and we should strive to have the unity that Jesus has with the Father, which a perfect unity. In fact, everything Jesus did and said while He was on the earth came from the Father. He never strayed beyond the will of the Father and neither should we.

In this lesson, I want to focus a little bit more about how the church/kingdom/body of Christ had its beginning in A.D. 30 because once people can understand that Jesus is the head of one church that started back then, it means there can be no other churches. As I said in the last lesson, just about every denomination in existence today had its start from the 1500s to the present time. The Catholic church would be the oldest denomination, but it had its official start in A.D. 325, which is almost 300 years too late.

While I think I gave enough information that proved the church started on the Day of Pentecost in my last lesson, I want you to consider a few more points. While Jesus was on the earth, He and John the Baptist taught the same message.

Mat. 3:1-3 John said the kingdom was at hand.

Mat. 4:17 Jesus said the kingdom was at hand.

Mat. 6:9 Jesus prays for the coming of the kingdom.

Mat. 10:7 Jesus sent the 12 out and told them to preach that the kingdom was at hand.

Without a doubt, while Jesus was on the earth the kingdom/church was not in place yet, but it was at hand. We learn more information about when the kingdom/church would come.

Mark 9:1 And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power."

This really limits the time frame because Jesus states that some of those He was talking to would not die before the kingdom of God is present with power. This tells us the church would be present with power within in the next 60 years at the most. Even if we didn't have any other Scripture, this one would limit the origin of the church to the first century, which eliminates any other church claiming to be of Christ that was started after the first century. We are given more clues as we can see in:

Lk. 24:44 Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me." ⁴⁵ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ "And you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Jesus says these things to His disciples after He been raised from the dead. Notice, verse 47 tells us where this new teaching would take place of repentance and the remission of sins, which is Jerusalem. This agrees with Isaiah 2, which also stated that the law of God would begin to be proclaimed in Jerusalem. However, verse 49 gives us some crucial information because we learn that when His disciples are in Jerusalem, the promised Holy Spirit would come on that day and endue them with power from on high.

So, all we have to do is show when this happened and it will show us when the kingdom came with power.

Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

This was right before Jesus would ascend to heaven, but He tells His disciples to wait in Jerusalem to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and then they would be witnesses for Him starting in Jerusalem, which basically the same thought we just looked at in Luke's account. Next we read:

Acts 2:1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord¹ in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

It is easy to see that the spirit endued them with power on the Day of Pentecost, which began them preaching about Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, and it was that day that those who obeyed God's plan of salvation, which included baptism, were added the church/kingdom by God (Acts 2:47). So, the kingdom was present with power on that day and this is when the church began, which was in A.D. 30.

You will also notice that before Pentecost the kingdom was spoken of being at hand, but after Pentecost, the kingdom was spoken of as present reality. For example:

Col. 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

Paul is saying that thanks to Jesus, Christians are in the kingdom. So, without any doubt there is one church and that church began in A.D. 30 and those who have obeyed God's plan of salvation are the ones in that church.

If anyone knows a little bit of church history, they will quickly point out that the church of Christ was founded by Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone. Some will even call us Campbellites. So, I wish people would understand that these men did not create the church of Christ. These were men who used to be part of a denomination, but began to want to get back to N.T. Christianity. It wasn't about creating something new, but getting back to where we were supposed to be. Mr. Campbell lived from 1788-1866. I want you to notice what Wayne Jackson wrote about Mr. Campbell.

It is a tragedy that the man who labored the bulk of his adult life with a view to encouraging others to abandon sectarianism should himself be accused of being the head and founder of the "Campbellite" church. The reformer utterly repudiated the designation. In 1826 Campbell wrote:

"Some religious editors in Kentucky call those who are desirous of seeing the ancient order of things restored, "the Restorationists," "the campbellites". . . This may go well with some; but all who fear God and keep his commands will pity and deplore the weakness and folly of those who either think to convince or to persuade by such means" (The Christian Baptist, Vol. IV, 88-89).

In 1828 Mr. Campbell responded to the question: "What is Campbellism?" in the following fashion:

"It is a nickname of reproach invented and adopted by those whose views, feelings and desires are all sectarian – who cannot conceive of Christianity in any other light than an ISM" (Christian Baptist, Vol. V.270).

Robert Richardson was the author of a massive work titled The Memoirs of Alexander Campbell. Therein Richardson wrote:

“Mr. Campbell never for a moment entertained the thought of becoming the head of a party or of allowing himself to be recognized as the founder of a religious denomination” (Memoirs, ii.441).

Once when Campbell was in New Orleans, a local newspaper characterized him as the “founder” of a denomination. Mr. Campbell was not pleased. He penned a letter to the editor:

You have done me, gentlemen, too much honor in saying I am the “founder” of the denomination, quite numerous and respectable in many portions of the West, technically known as “Christians,” but more commonly as “Campbellites.”

I have always repudiated all human heads and human names for the people of the Lord, and shall feel very thankful if you will correct the erroneous impression which your article may have made in thus representing me as the founder of a religious denomination (Memoirs, ii.441).

Wayne Jackson goes on to say:

It is a matter of historical record that there were churches of Christ – both in Europe and in America – before Alexander Campbell had a clear concept of what primitive Christianity was all about. Leslie G. Thomas has documented New Testament churches in Scotland, England, and Ireland, dating between 1778 and 1810 (The Restoration Handbook, 73). Historical accounts reveal that the Old Philadelphia congregation of the Lord’s people, which was near Morrison, Tennessee, was organized in the year 1810. Alexander Campbell was not baptized until 1812, and he continued to be affiliated with the Baptists until the 1820s.

Churches of Christ do not owe their origin to Campbell or any other human leader. The fact that some, therefore, delight in using the term “Campbellite” to refer to those who choose to be called simply “Christians,” rather than wearing humanly-devised titles, is more of a commentary upon their characters than anything else.

Why is it that so many religionists have such a difficult time being comfortable with the name “Christian,” and that alone (cf. Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16)? The use of human titles is sinful (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10ff). <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/822-alexander-campbell-and-christs-church>

While men like Campbell and Stone did great things during their time to get people to move away from denominations and get back to the Bible, they were not the originators of the churches of Christ, Jesus was. We even see the church of Christ mentioned in Scripture in:

Rom. 16:16 The churches of Christ greet you.

Another thing some seem to be confused about is when it comes to baptism. Some seem to think the church of Christ's whole world revolves around baptizing people in water. In fact, some seem to think that is all we are really interested in. So, I wish people would understand that while we teach what Peter taught in Acts 2:38 that baptism is for forgiveness of our sins, this is not only focus. In fact, it is the easiest part of Christianity because once you obey God's plan of salvation which includes being baptized for the forgiveness of your sins, then you have to live the rest of your life faithfully till the day you die. So, we don't make baptism a hobby horse, but we will stress its important because having your sins forgiven and being added to the church by God is important, but we also preach the rest of God's Word and we emphasize how you are to live a righteous life by doing your best to follow what God's Word says.

As I pointed out in the first lesson, most of the denominational world would say that baptism is not necessary for salvation and they would say that men like Campbell created this doctrine, but the problem is that no man created this teaching. I showed in our last lesson that baptism is when our sins are forgiven and we become a new creature that is added to the one the church by God.

Since following God's plan of salvation makes you become part of the church of Christ all we have to do is find what the early writers wrote about baptism and what it was for. If it matches up with what the Bible says then we can say that the church of Christ was alive and well even beyond its origin in A.D. 30.

I am going to give you some quotes from what is called the early church fathers. Please keep in mind that these are uninspired writing, and you can find things in their writings that do not match up with the Bible, but these writings do give us insight into what they were teaching during their time. So, if we see quotes talking about baptism being for the forgiveness of sins, then we are going to see that the church of Christ was in place then because this kind of baptism also makes you added to the church by God.

(A.D. 130) Barnabas:

Let us inquire if the Lord was careful to make a revelation in advance concerning the water and the cross. Concerning the water it was written with regard to Israel how they will not receive the baptism which brings forgiveness of sins but will supply another for themselves.... Blessed are those who placed their hope in his cross and descended into the water.... We descend into the water full of sins and uncleanness, and we ascend bearing reverence in our heart and having hope in Jesus in our spirit (11:1, 8, 11).

(A.D. 130) The Shepherd of Hermas:

The tower which you see being built is myself, the church. . . Hear, then, why the tower has been built on the waters. Your life .was saved and will be saved through water. The tower has been founded by the pronouncement of his almighty and glorious Name, and it is supported by the invisible power of the Master (Vision III.iii.3).

"I have heard, Sir, from some teachers that there is no other repentance except that one when we descended into the water and received the forgiveness of our former sins." He said to me, "You heard correctly, for it is so. He who has received forgiveness of sins ought to sin no more but to live in purity" (Mandate IV.iii.1).

Therefore these also who have fallen asleep received the seal of the Son of God and "entered into the kingdom of God." For, he said, before a man bears the name of the Son of God he is dead, but whenever he receives the seal, he puts away mortality and receives life. The seal then is the water. They descend then into the water dead and they ascend alive. The seal itself, then, was preached to them also, and they made use of it in order that they might "enter into the kingdom of God." . . . These apostles and teachers who preached the name of the Son of God, when they fell asleep in the power and faith of the Son of God, preached also to those who had fallen asleep before them and gave to them the seal of the preaching. They descended therefore with them into the water and ascended again. The former went down alive and came up alive, but the latter who had fallen asleep previously went down dead but came up alive (Similitudes IX.xvi.3-6).

(A.D. 50–160) Didache: (Author of the writing is unknown.)

Concerning baptism, baptize in this way. After you have spoken all these things, "baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," in running water. If you do not have running water, baptize in other water. If you are not able in cold, then in warm. If you do not have either, pour out water three times on the head "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Before the baptism the one baptizing and the one being baptized are to fast, and any others who are able. Command the one being baptized to fast beforehand a day or two (Didache 7).

Even though this is an early writing, we can see how the writer has added many things compared to what the Bible says about baptism. For instance, the Bible says nothing about using cold running water or having to fast before a person is baptized. The writer also offers pouring as an alternative when immersion is not possible. However, the Bible does not give an example or even hint as such an alternative. Despite the many additions this writer has made, it confirms these early *Christians* believed the baptism Jesus commanded (Mt. 28:19) was to be done in water.

(A.D. 150 - 160) Justin Martyr:

By reason, therefore, of this laver of repentance and knowledge of God, which has been ordained on account of the transgression of God's people, as Isaiah cries, we have believed, and testify that that very baptism which he announced is alone able to purify those who have repented; and this is the water of life. . . . For what is the use of that baptism which cleanses the flesh and body alone? Baptize the soul from wrath and from covetousness, from envy, and from hatred; and, lo! the body is pure (The Apostolic Fathers Dialogue with Trypho XIV).

(A.D. 180) Irenaeus

Now, this is what faith does for us, as the elders, the disciples of the apostles, have handed down to us. First of all, it admonishes us to remember that we have received baptism for remission of sins -in the name of God the Father, and in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became incarnate and died and was raised, and in the Holy Spirit of God; and that this baptism is the seal of eternal life and is rebirth unto God, that we be no more children of mortal men, but of the eternal and everlasting God (Proof of the Apostolic Preaching).

And when we come to refute them, we shall show in its fitting-place, that this class of men have been instigated by Satan to a denial of that baptism which is regeneration to God, and thus to a renunciation of the whole [Christian] faith.... For the baptism instituted by the visible Jesus was for the remission of sins (The Apostolic Fathers Against Heresies Book I XXI).

"And [4854] dipped himself," says [the Scripture], "seven times in Jordan." [4855] It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being baptized, but [it served] as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, we are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions; being spiritually regenerated as new-born babes, even as the Lord has declared: "Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (The Apostolic Fathers Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus XXXIV).

I could list many more quotes that say the same thing, but these all came from the second century. Since these men were telling us that they believed that baptism was for the forgiveness of sins, that tells us that the church of Christ was alive and well in the second century because people were obeying God's plan of salvation and were being added to the church by God. So not only does the Bible clearly teach that the church of Christ began in A.D. 30 in Acts 2, early church history shows that they were teaching the same thing that the Bible says about salvation.

I wish people in the religious world could understand how important it is to not listen to what man is teaching them and to simply listen to what the Word of God says especially when it comes to baptism. I personally believe that one has to work really hard to say that baptism is not necessary for salvation because the necessity of baptism is taught throughout the N.T. Jesus said:

Jn. 3:5 "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Mk. 16:16 "He who believes and is baptized will be saved

Peter taught the same thing:

Acts 2:38 "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins

1 Pet. 3:21 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism

After Saul was blinded on the road to Damascus and called Jesus Lord and prayed and fasted for three days, Ananias came to Saul and said:

Acts 22:16 `And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Paul would go on from here and pen many of the letters we have in the N.T. and he taught more about what baptism was for than any other in the N.T. in Romans 6, Colossians 2:11ff, and Gal. 3:27 to name a few. Every conversion in the Book of Acts shows people being baptized. So, I really wish people would just open their eyes and their hearts to what the N.T. says about water baptism and how it is the point that we receive the forgiveness of our sins, and we are added to

the one church by God.

Some seem to think that baptism is a work of man, but they are wrong. Now it is a work of obedience because we must obey it, but I wish people would understand that what happens at our baptism is the work of God and we are supposed to put our faith in God, knowing that we are being united with Christ in our baptism and the old man is dying and we are raised up a new creature in Christ.

To prove this notice carefully what Paul says in:

Col. 2:11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

Now don't miss what Paul said. Baptism is referred to as a circumcision made without hands. Circumcision to mean to cut off. Paul says this circumcision in the putting off of the body of sin, which happens when we are baptized, and then when we are raised up, we are made alive together with Jesus with our sins forgiven. How do we know this happening at our baptism, Paul said it was **through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.** It is God that is doing the work at our baptism, not man and not us. Yes, we had an obedient faith to get into the water and submit ourselves to it, but only God could unite with Jesus and forgive us of our sins, but as always, we must believe that these things happen to us when we are baptized.

I have more that I want to share with you on things I wish people understood about the church of Christ, but I will have to save that for our next lesson. I hope you found this lesson easy to understand and have gained a better understanding about what the Bible teaches about the one church and about God's plan of salvation.

THINGS I WISH PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD ABOUT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Part 3

In this series of lessons I am exploring things I wish people understood about the church of Christ. In our first two lessons, I focused on how we can know the truth by going to God's Word and not man's opinion. I showed how the church of Christ is not a denomination, but is the very church Jesus bought and paid for with His blood that you read about in the New Testament. I also showed from prophecy that the one church that Jesus is the head of had its start in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. While men like Alexzander Campbell, Barton Stone and others began a movement to get people back to the Bible, they were not the founders of the church of Christ, Jesus was.

In this lesson, I want to focus on a few more things about the church. Many people today say give me Jesus but not the church. They view the church as some manmade organization that is not necessary. I believe people have to come to this conclusion from seeing how many denominations operate because they are manmade. I have heard of some denominations that will go after their members if they don't tithe, which is not a N.T. practice, and they will threaten to banish them if they don't. Now, as long as they send their tithes in, they are happy even if they don't attend a single service. Certainly, there is a lot of abuse that is done by man while claiming to be living for Christ.

However, the concept of the church in the Bible is not like this at all and there is no way for you accept Jesus, yet reject the church. Think about this. Jesus said He would build His church in Mt. 16:18. So, if you reject the church, you are rejecting the very thing Jesus built. If that is not enough, we also know that Jesus purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28) and that He is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23). When you obey God's plan of salvation, you are added to the church by God (Acts 2:47). So, you can say give me Jesus, but not the church, but that is impossible because you cannot have one without the other. Besides this, Paul tells us that it is the church that Jesus is the Savior of (Eph. 5:23) and it is the church/kingdom that Jesus will hand over to the Father at the judgment day (1 Cor. 15:24). So, I wish people would understand that you cannot separate the body from the head. Jesus and His church are part of the same package. To reject the body, is to reject the head and to count the very thing He purchased with His blood as being useless.

This brings me to my next point, which is how the church is organized? If you look at the denominational world, you find all kinds of organizational patterns. Many will have one pastor over the church, others have an earthly headquarter that is over many churches. The headquarter is responsible for the hiring and firing of the pastors and some cases, they make the decision on what doctrine they will follow. One good example of this is the Jehovah Witnesses. Their headquarters not only dictate what their doctrine is, they put out a publication every month or quarter and they have each of their churches preach the same lessons and teach the same class material. So, whether you are in Oklahoma or New York, you will be taught the same lesson.

While I am sure there are some great organizers out there, I wish people understood that God gave us a pattern to follow when it comes to organizing the church. Those of us in the church of Christ believe that the Word of God is our pattern to follow and that we should hold fast to that pattern as Paul told Timothy.

2 Tim. 1:13 Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

We truly believe that God has given us everything we need to know in Scripture to be pleasing to Him and we believe that we are to follow His Word without adding to it or taking away from it. As Paul said:

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Peter said:

2 Pet. 1:3 as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

We understand that we will be judged by the Word of God.

Jn. 12:48 "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him-- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

Since we will be judged by the Word of God, we take what it says seriously because God's Word is its own witness to why we should take heed to what God's Word says. We must remember what Jesus said:

Matthew 7:21 " Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Jesus clearly states that in order for us to enter into the kingdom of heaven, we must do the will of the Father, which means there is a pattern for us to follow. Starting from the beginning of time, God has had a pattern for us to follow, and that has never changed. For example: Adam and Eve were given the following restriction:

Genesis 3:3 "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

This was God's pattern. They could not eat or touch that fruit. When Eve disobeyed that command and so did Adam, they were punished for it (Gen. 3:14ff). When God sets a pattern and we break that pattern, we sin.

Noah understood that God's pattern was to be followed when it came to building the ark. He never entertained the idea that one tree would be just as good as another or that it would be acceptable to add or take away from God's pattern. Since Noah was a faithful man, we read:

Genesis 6:22 Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.

Many more examples could be given, but examples like these show that during this early period, God's pattern was to be followed. If it was not followed, it was a sin.

We can see the same pattern during the Law of Moses. We know that God had a specific pattern for how the tabernacle and the items associated were to be built and laid out (Ex. 25). There were numerous laws that were to be kept. For example: the Sabbath was a time of rest and not even sticks were to be gathered, but one man tried to defy that command, and the Lord said that He must be put to death (Num. 15:32ff).

Who can forget Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10.

Leviticus 10:1 Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. ² So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

These men lost their lives because they tried to do things their way instead of God's way. Even the humble Moses found himself breaking God's pattern when He struck the rock instead of speaking to it. Since he disobeyed, he was not allowed to enter the promise land (Nub. 20).

Notice what the writer of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 11:30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.

When the Bible speaks of a faith that is pleasing to God, it is always an active faith. Joshua and his men believed in God and had no doubt that God would give them Jericho just as He said (Josh. 6:2). However, they had to obey the commands of God, to receive this gift.

- The men of war were to compass the city
- They were to compass the city once a day for six days
- Seven priests were to bear 7 trumpets of rams' horns before the ark
- On the seventh day they were to compass the city 7 times.
- Afterwards, the priests were to blow the trumpets and all the people were to shout (Jos. 6:3ff)

All of these commands had to be followed with an obedient faith before God would cause the walls to fall down. Nothing could be added or taken away from these commands.

Even those with good intentions cannot change the pattern of God's Word. Uzzah found this out the hard way when he reached his hand out to steady the ark and was struck dead for breaking God's command (2 Sam. 6:6ff). Notice what God said to Joshua:

Joshua 1:7 "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. ⁸ "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.

Many more examples from the O.T. could be given to show that the pattern of God must be followed and that God means what He says, but I want to offer one more example from the O.T. Naaman was a commander of the army of the king of Syria (2 Kgs. 5:1). He had a problem with leprosy, and the king found out that it was possible for him to be cured, so he sent him to Israel to be cured. To make a long story short, he goes to Elisha, who does not even grace him with his presence, but gives word to him to dip in the Jordan River 7 times.

We all know the story, Naaman is mad at first, but his servant talks him into obeying the words that came from Elisha. Please note that Elisha did not say that he could not go to any other river because he did not have to. When he told him to go the Jordan River, he excluded all other rivers. When Naaman humbled himself and followed the commands that came from God, which included going to the Jordan and dipping 7 times, his leprosy was cured. If he had not followed the commands, he would not have been healed.

When we get to the N.T., we learn that God expects us to follow the pattern He has laid out under the new covenant as well. If we add to it or take from it is a sin. We can know that when God commands us to do something that it excludes everything else. We do not need a list of commands that tells us what we specifically cannot do. For example, we are told not to lie that covers all lies. God's Word does not have to provide us with every conceivable lie that we cannot tell.

We find the same warnings in the N.T. as we did in O.T.

1 Corinthians 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. (See. Rev. 22:18-19).

We have no right to add or take away from the pattern found in the N.T. We can know the things that are written provide us with everything we need to know about being pleasing to God and making it to heaven (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). We know that we will be judged by things that are written in the N.T. (Jn. 12:48; Rev. 20:11-15).

We are taught to not listen to another gospel that is not found in the N.T. (Gal. 1:8-9), and we are told to hold fast the pattern of sound Words (2 Tim. 1:13). We are to observe ALL the things commanded by Jesus that were taught through His disciples (Mt. 28:20). We are to study the pattern in the N.T. which gives us the ability to rightly handle the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15).

We are told to walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). If we do not have faith we cannot be pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6). How do we have faith and walk by faith:

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Without a doubt, God has set forth a pattern for us to follow in the N.T. If there was no pattern, then none of these verses I have mentioned would have any meaning whatsoever. Many more verses could be produced, but these verses clearly show that if we want to be pleasing God, we must follow the pattern in the N.T. or we will not make it to heaven. Paul wrote:

2 Thessalonians 1:7 when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

We also have examples of those who disobeyed and sinned in the N.T. Ananias and his wife were struck dead for telling a lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5). Simon wanted to buy the ability to pass on the Holy Spirit, and he rebuked for this sin (Acts 8). More examples could be given, but these examples show that God takes His commands seriously and so should we.

Now that I have given a brief summary of why we should be so concerned about doing things God's way, let's consider the organization of the church. The church you read about in the Bible did not have an earthly headquarter because Jesus is the head. Instead, each congregation, which makes up the one church, is autonomous and the elders within the congregation are the ones who oversee that congregation.

Before I go any further, let's talk about this idea of autonomy. Autonomy means to self-rule. Now you will not find this specific term in Scripture, but the principle is there. You can see how the church is to be organized from this one verse:

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

There are bishops, which is a synonymous term with elders, overseers, pastors, Presbyterians, and shepherds. Then there are deacons and the saints which is everyone else. BTW, there is no concept of clergy and laity in the Bible, but I want you to understand that elders were to be appointed over each individual congregation as can be seen in:

Acts 14:23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 20:17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

Acts 20:28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

When Paul would go around setting up churches, which are individual congregations, they would appoint elders (plural) in every church. It was Paul who called for the elders (plural) from Ephesus to come to him. These were the elders of the congregation at Ephesus. We clearly see that they were the overseers of that church, which belongs to Jesus that He bought and paid for it with His blood. Since each congregation has its own elders, each congregation overseen by those elders. So, each church is autonomous.

Now let me tell what this means and what it does not mean. If the elders of our congregation decide to have a worship service at 10 am and 2 p.m. on Sunday, then they can make that decision and no other congregation can have a say in the matter. The church in the next city may only have morning services on Sunday. Again, our elders cannot do anything about that. If our elders decide to support a missionary, they cannot in turn make the church in the next city do the same. Basically, any expedient decision is at the discretion of the eldership and no other church can tell them what to do in this area.

However, autonomy does not mean that a church can teach and do whatever it wants because the doctrine we teach and how we worship God must line up with God's Word. We are not allowed self-rule ourselves based on what is popular or what we think is right or wrong. Granted, we all have a free will and can do what we want, but we cannot do sinful things and not face the consequences. Some have taken this idea of autonomy to mean that one church cannot judge another church in the way of righteousness because it is none of their business, but this is not true.

Consider these words from Wayne Jackson:

When Paul wrote First Corinthians to the church in Corinth, he was living in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8), where he labored for approximately three years (Acts 20:31). While in Ephesus, the apostle received reports of various happenings in Corinth. Accordingly, he wrote First Corinthians to address problems within that church.

That congregation was divisive in spirit (1:11ff). The Corinthian saints retained a fornicating brother within their fellowship (5:1ff). Some were litigating their differences before heathen judges (6:1ff); others were abusing spiritual gifts (12-14). Some of them even denied the future resurrection of the body (15:12).

It apparently never occurred to Paul that he was "meddling" in the affairs of a church of which he was not a member.

A Christian has the right to oppose error — wherever it may be. We would respectfully suggest, however, that it is not a reflection of maturity and balance to virtually consume one's time in monitoring the problems of other congregations. When one virtually makes a

career of “policing” the brotherhood, he reveals that he does not have a responsible view of what Christianity is about. (May One “Judge” Other Churches?)

I total agree with what Mr. Jackson wrote. If a church in another town decides to start practicing something that the Bible does not authorize and we hear about it, certainly we should be concerned about it and do what we can to reason with them to get back to what the Bible says. Autonomy is not some wall you can hide behind to commit sinful things. Just as you can see from the example given about Paul writing to Corinthians the same could be done today. In fact, it is an act of love to do so.

As Mr. Jackson pointed out, we should not make it our main mission in life to seek out what churches are doing wrong, but if we learn about it, it should concern us and cause us to reach out to them about what they are doing. So, the bottom line is that autonomy only has to do with matters of expediency, and not doctrine.

Now, let’s consider the organization of the church. I have already pointed out that there are three basic parts to a church. Elders, deacons, and saints. Many today will have one pastor over a church, but as I pointed out earlier, the term pastor is synonymous with bishops, elders, overseers, Presbyterians, and shepherds. While some like to make these into different offices, they are not because they are used to refer to the same office. There is always a plurality of elders over a church and never just one. So the whole concept of there being a pastor singular over a church is false.

Many think the pastor is the preacher. Now, it’s possible for a preacher to be one of the pastors/elders within a church, but it is not always the case that they are one and they are certainly not the only one. I wish people would understand that there are qualifications for an elder and they are found in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1. These qualifications are not some general guide, they are to be considered carefully. In fact, let me read Timothy’s account.

1 Timothy 3:1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop¹, he desires a good work. ² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; ³ not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money¹, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; ⁴ one who rules his own house well, having *his* children in submission with all reverence ⁵ (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); ⁶ not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil. ⁷ Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

I wonder if those who call their preacher their pastor have ever considered if he even meets these qualifications? We need to trust that God knows who is best to oversee the church and would should respect these qualifications.

We also learn that deacons, who are recognized servants, are always found in the plural as well. They have qualifications as found in:

1 Tim. 3:8 Likewise deacons *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, ⁹ holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. ¹⁰ But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found* blameless. ¹¹ Likewise *their wives must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well. ¹³ For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Finally, we have the saints, which is what all Christians are. A saint is not some religious person who has passed on and some miracles have been associated with them like the Catholic Church teaches, no every child of God is called a saint.

So, we can see that the Scriptures teach the church is autonomous when it comes to expedient matters and that each church is to appoint elders (plural) that are qualified, and they are to have deacons plural that are qualified, and all Christians including elders, deacons and preachers are saints. If we love God, then we will keep His commandments and not add to the organization of His church or take away from it. We understand that God has given us a pattern to follow and if we break that pattern, it is a sin. I have more to say about the things I wish people understood about the church of Christ, but I will save those thoughts for our next lesson.

THINGS I WISH PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD ABOUT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Part 4

In this series of lessons, I have been talking about things I wish people understood about the church of Christ because many are confused about what we teach and what we stand for. So far in this series, I have talked about the following:

- We are not just one denomination out of the 30,000 plus that exist today, we are simply Christians who belong to the one church that you read about in the N.T. which Jesus is the head of.
- We believe that you can find the truth in God's Word and that the N.T. is our authority. Since the N.T. is our authority, we should only do those things that it authorizes us to do, which means we do not allow our hearts to be our guide or man's opinion.
- No man founded the church of Christ because Jesus is the one who built His church and it had its beginning in A.D. 30 on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.
- We believe the Scriptures teach that for us to be saved, we have to hear the Word God, believe what it says about Jesus, repent, confess and be baptized for the forgiveness of our sins and then remain faithful to God and His Word till the day we die.
- We believe the Scriptures teach that we should be unified with God first, then with each other based on what the Word of God teaches.
- We believe the Scriptures teach that we should not divide ourselves into different groups by calling ourselves after other men or practices, which includes denominations.
- We believe that the church is to be organized with elders, deacons, and saints, just as the N.T. teaches.

The first thing I want to deal with in this lesson is how many people in the religious world seem to think that since we call ourselves N.T. Christians and we boldly state that the N.T. is our authority, they seem to conclude that we don't believe in the O.T. and we don't even study it. I want to take some time to answer this because I think it is important for people to understand what the O.T. means to us or does not mean to us and more importantly why.

It is true that the O.T. was not a covenant with us today because it was a covenant with the children of Israel at which began at mount Horeb according to:

Deuteronomy 5:1 And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. 2 "The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. 3 "The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive.

In fact, verse 3 teaches us that not even men such as Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob were not under this O.T. law, and Paul makes it clear that Christians are not under this either in:

Romans 7:6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

The Book of Hebrews also talks a great deal about how we are under a new covenant

Hebrews 8:6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant established on better promises and Hebrews 8:13 tells us that this new covenant has made the old one obsolete.

Paul makes this statement in:

Col. 2:11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins¹ of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Paul is telling us how our faith and baptism work together because we are to put our faith in the working of God to know that we are being united with Christ in baptism and that our sins are being forgiven and that we are being raised up alive with Christ, which is part of the N.T. teaching, but what I want you to focus on is what Paul said about the handwriting of requirements, which is referring to the law of Moses or we could say the old covenant. He says that Jesus took it out of the way and nailed it to the cross, which means its authority died at the cross and the new covenant began, but the new covenant had to be probated, which is a legal term that means that even though a will goes into effect when a person dies, its terms still have to be read, which is exactly how the writer of Hebrew describes the new covenant in:

Heb. 9:15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. ¹⁶ For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. ¹⁷ For a testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.

Of course, we know that this testament or will was probated by the apostles in Acts 2. Paul basically says the same thing as he did in our verses from Colossians in:

Eph. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances*, so as to create in Himself one new man *from the two, thus making peace*, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

Under the new covenant, all are accepted by God. It is no longer the Hebrew people, it is Jew and Gentile. Again, you see the same thought taught. Jesus put to death the law of commandments, which is referring to the Law of Moses or we could say the old covenant.

Since the old covenant has been deemed obsolete and was put to death on the cross should we care what the O.T. has to say? Should even study the O.T. at all since we are not under its authority?

I hope many people are able to hear what I am about to say about this. Even though we are not under the authority of the Law of Moses and we don't do things like animal sacrifices nor do we keep those festivals that were specifically for the Hebrew people, I will show that we in the church of Christ consider the O.T. as being very valuable to us, and we would not ever think for a minute the O.T. should not be taught or studied.

The main purpose of the OT can be found in:

Galatians 3:24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

So, the purpose of the O.T. was to prepare the people for the coming of Christ. This brings us to our first point on why we should study the O.T. and consider it valuable.

Romans 15:3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." 4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

In verse 3, Paul quotes from the O.T. in Psalm 69:9 and then in verse 4, he states that those things written before were written for our learning. Those things written before are talking about the O.T. The O.T. was preserved for you and me so we could learn a great deal about God and ourselves. Let's examine 3 things that the O.T. teaches us about ourselves.

1. It answers the question, Who am I?

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

2. It teaches us how we were created.

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

3. It answer the great question of why we are here or what our purpose in life is.

The Book of Ecclesiastes was written from the perspective of a man who had everything from an earthly standpoint, yet had nothing to look forward to if there is no God. The answer to our question is found in the last 2 verses of Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

Now let's take a look at 3 things we learn about God.

1. God is omniscient - all knowing.

Psalm 139:1 A Psalm of David. O LORD, You have searched me and known me. 2 You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. 3 You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. 4 For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.

1 Chronicles 28:9 ... for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts...

Since God knows the intent of our thoughts, we can have a deeper understanding of why Paul tells us to bring:

2 Corinthians 10:5 ... every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

The O.T. is letting us know that God knows our very thoughts even if we don't make them know to others. From this we can see that God is all knowing as:

Psalm 147:5 ... His understanding is infinite.

2. God is omnipotent - all powerful.

Anyone who has the power to create the heavens and the earth and all the life is definitely all powerful and Job came to this same realization after God asked him all kinds of questions about the origin of life and life itself. Job said:

Job 42:2 "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.

3. God is omnipresent - that means He is present in all places at all times.

Psalm 139:7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; 12 Indeed, the darkness

shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You. See also Jer 23:23-24

Back in our text in Rom. 15:4, I want you to notice one more reason we should study the O.T. today. Paul said:

we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

When you study the O.T. and you learn how God deals with His people, you learn how much He loves His creation and how He always keeps His promises. When we see the promises He made to Abraham, Moses, and others in the O.T. and how He kept His promises every single time, it will give us great comfort knowing that God will also keep the promises He has made to us under the new covenant. Not only does the O.T. give us hope, it also convinces us that the Word of God is inspired because of all the prophecies that were made and came true. As you can see, the O.T. is there for us to learn from, and we should not neglect to study it or ever consider it being useless or not important.

2. Our second point come from:

1 Corinthians 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." 8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Paul is telling us that the O.T. is very valuable to the Christian today because we can learn from the examples of how God dealt with His people in the O.T. I think everybody can understand this concept because we all know that if you don't study history and its failures, you will be doomed to repeat the same mistakes again. Let's take a quick look at 4 valuable lessons we can learn from the O.T. examples.

1. In Genesis 4, we learn about Cain and Able. Cain made an offering that wasn't pleasing to God, but Able did. Because of this, Cain got mad and murdered his brother. From this example we learn two things.

1. God wants us to give Him our best and what is acceptable
2. Jealousy and anger towards others can only bring about harm. In Cain's case, it caused him to murder his own flesh and blood, and God punished Him for this.

2. In Genesis 6 and 7, we learn about Noah and the great flood. We can learn two things from this as well.

1. God will only tolerate unrighteousness for so long. God even states that He was sorry that He had made mankind in Gen 6:6. So, He destroyed everyone except Noah and his family.
2. We can learn that God will take care of those who love and obey Him.

3. Our third example comes from:

Leviticus 10:1 Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

Nadab and Abihu offered a fire, but it wasn't the kind of fire that God commanded, so they paid with their lives. We can learn from this that God does not want man to do things his own way, He wants mankind to worship Him according to the Scriptures, which tells us that we should take God's Word seriously and do our best to worship Him how He has commanded us in Scripture.

4. Our next example comes from Job. When you read the book of Job, you learn that Job had to exercise great patience and endured many hardships, but in the end, he received his reward since he persevered against the devil. James uses Job as an example to teach us to be patient in our sufferings.

James 5:10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord -- that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

These were just 4 examples out of many. For example, Hebrews 11 uses many O.T. examples to show us what kind of faith we should have. Did you know that there are over 450 quotations or references in the N.T. from the Book of Genesis to Esther alone? This should tell us how important the O.T. is. So, we in the church of Christ would strongly encourage people to read the O.T. and to learn from the examples found within it.

3. The O.T. makes us wise for salvation.

2 Timothy 3:15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

In context, the Holy Scriptures mentioned here are talking about the O.T. Scriptures because that is what he would have had available to him in his childhood. As Paul states, the Holy Scriptures makes one wise for salvation. But how is this possible? It is through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. Notice how this goes hand and hand with:

Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Just about everywhere you look in the O.T., you can find passages that look forward to Jesus and the salvation that would come through Him. We are truly blessed today because we can look at the big picture and see how God's plan of redemption unfolded from the beginning to the end. The O.T. prophets only had a glimpse into what you I know today. In 1 Peter 1:3-9, it talks about how we should rejoice knowing that Christians will be saved and live in heaven with God forever. Look at the following verses:

1 Peter 1:10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven -- things which angels desire to look into.

Not only did the prophets desire to fully understand the mystery of Christ, the angels wanted to know as well. Paul tells us in Ephesians 3 that we can understand the mystery of Christ by reading the Word of God. It amazes me at how many times the O.T. points toward Christ and the new covenant we are under today. The N.T. Christians used the O.T. over and over again to teach people about Christ. For example:

- Peter and the other apostles used it in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost.
- Stephen used it to defend his teaching of Christ in Acts 7.
- Paul used it to teach the people at Antioch about Christ in Acts 13.
- I am sure that we are all familiar with the story of the eunuch in Acts 8 who was reading from Isaiah 53 and did not understand it, but Philip the evangelist came up to him and preached Jesus to him from the book of Isaiah. So you see, the O.T. can make us wise for salvation.

The last point I want to make comes from:

2 Timothy 3: 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The first thing you see is that all scripture is inspired by God. This includes both the Old and New Testament. That within itself should make us want to study both the Old and the New Testament. Please consider the following:

- The Scriptures are profitable for doctrine or teaching. As we have already examined, there is a great number of lessons we can learn from the O.T.

- The Scriptures are also for reproof and correction. We learn many examples from the O.T. of how God wants His people to repent and turn toward Him.
- The Scriptures instruct us in righteousness. Over and over again, the apostles would use O.T. examples to show how Christians should conduct themselves.
- Finally, the Scriptures make us complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. The O.T. and the N.T. are to be used together to thoroughly equip us for all that we do. There are many passages in the N.T. that simply cannot be fully understood without studying the background of the O.T.

Much more could be said about this, but I think I have made the point that those in the church of Christ believe in the O.T. and would never tell anyone not to study or use it to grow from. However, we would firmly teach that you cannot use the O.T. as your authority for what we do today because we are under the law of Christ, which is new covenant that went into effect after He died for us on the cruel cross.

We would firmly teach that if you can bring one or two things over the Law of Moses that was not retaught in the N.T. then you have to bring it all. You cannot pick and choose those things you like from the old law and make them part of the new law, while disregarding those things you don't like in the old law. For example, the old law taught people to stone a disobedient child, adulterers, and homosexuals, yet people don't do this under the new covenant because it was not commanded. In fact, there are 613 laws under the law of Moses, and I could make a huge list from those laws that people would not want to do today. So, the point is that, we need to allow the N.T. to be our authority because it is the covenant that we are under. It does not matter what was allowed or practiced under the old law that does not give us authority to practice those things under the new law.

If people today could understand this simple principle, it would help there be less division and it would cause people to focus on the N.T. for our authority today. So, please study the O.T. and learn from it, but when it comes to worshipping God in spirit and in truth and doing those things that will be pleasing to Him today, we must go to the N.T. because it is what we will be judged by. As Jesus said:

Jn. 12:48 "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. ⁴⁹ "For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. ⁵⁰ "And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."

This is not just talking about the words in red because Jesus taught His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit to them and they would in turn teach the people about what Jesus had said and what the will of the Father is in John 14 – 16.

Though I will not cover everything that I wish people understood about the church of Christ, I have at least one more lesson I want to preach on this topic. I hope you all will share what I said in this lesson today with others, so they no longer have to be confused about what we teach and believe about the O.T.

THINGS I WISH PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD ABOUT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST PART 5

In this series of lessons, I have been talking about things I wished people understood about the church of Christ because many have the wrong idea about what we stand for and what we believe.

One of the things that makes us unique today is that we don't use musical instruments as part of our worship to God. Many do not understand why we think this way. Some even come to the conclusion that we hate musical instruments.

So, what I would like to do is to simply explain our position on this and why we think the way we do, but first I want to deal with the idea that we hate musical instruments. This couldn't be further from the truth. The people who make up the church love musical instruments just like the next person. In fact, we have many members that play musical instruments and they play them well. So, it's completely wrong to assume that we hate musical instruments just because we don't use them to worship God.

I could easily preach two full sermons on this topic of why we don't use musical instruments, but I don't have to because in our previous lessons, I have already established two very important points that will make it easy to understand why we don't worship with musical instruments.

First, I have shown that we believe that that is very important that we follow what the Word of God says. We looked at several examples from the Bible about the consequences that come from doing things our way instead of God's way.

Second, I proved from our last lesson that our authority comes from the N.T. Yes, the O.T. is important, but it is not our authority because it was a covenant made to the Hebrew people.

When you combine these two points, it becomes clear that we should use the N.T. as our authority for what we do today and we should not add to it or take away from what it tells us to do. As Paul said:

1 Corinthians 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

John adds the following:

2 John 1:9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

Verses like these confirm that we should uphold God's Word and not stray from it if we want to be pleasing to God.

When people learn that we don't use musical instruments, one of the first things they will point out is that they used them in the O.T. This is true. Musical Instruments were used in the O.T. for various reasons as can be seen in the following Scriptures.

Gen. 4:21 His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute.

This shows that Musical Instruments have been around for a long time.

Numbers 10:1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² "Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps. ³ "When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. ⁴ "But if they blow *only* one, then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall gather to you.

God commanded that these trumpets be made and used to call the congregation together or to signal the movement of the camps.

Instruments were used at Jericho in Joshua 6, and David used them to calm the spirit of Saul in 1 Samuel 16:23. Now pay close attention to the next verses:

2 Chr. 29:25 And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the LORD by His prophets. ²⁶ The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. ²⁷ Then Hezekiah commanded *them* to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD *also* began, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel. ²⁸ So all the assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all *this continued* until the burnt offering was finished. ²⁹ And when they had finished offering, the king and all who were present with him bowed and worshiped. ³⁰ Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped.

There are many more verses that could be used to show that they used musical instruments in the O.T. as part of their worship to God, but these verses prove that God commanded them to be used. Now if we lived under the O.T., I would say that is not only ok for us to use musical instruments as part of our worship to God, but that is necessary for us to use them because God commanded their use.

As I pointed out in our last lesson, we are not under the O.T. We don't do animal sacrifices nor do we stone sinners and a host of other things commanded in the O.T. because we are under a new covenant, so we must go by what it says and not the old. That is exactly what we in the church of Christ do. When it comes to the N.T., you will not find a command or even one example of Christians using musical instruments as part of their worship to God.

Now let's take a look at some passages about singing and how it is to be done.

Ephesians 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

From these verses we learn there are two different purposes for singing in our worship to God. The first purpose is singing praises to God from our hearts. This purpose can also be seen in the following verses.

Hebrews 2:12 .. "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."

Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

This last verse would certainly include singing to God.

James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.

Surely we can all agree that when we come together for the purpose of worshiping God, that it is a cheerful time and so we should sing praises to God as James suggests. We also have an example where singing is directed toward God outside the public worship as well.

Acts 16:25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

So whether you are in public worship or somewhere else, we can sing praises to God through song.

The second purpose we learn from Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 is that when we sing, we are teaching and admonishing one another. I like to refer to this as congregational teaching. The word 'admonishing' means to warn. This is why it is important that the song leader picks out songs that edify. When we sing about God's amazing grace or about how the judgment day is coming, these songs are how we teach and admonish one another about God's Word. With this mind, we can understand that the songs we sing need to be Biblical and should not contain false doctrine. You wouldn't want a preacher to stand up and teach something false. Well, in the same manner, we don't want to be guilty of teaching something false when we are singing. Sometimes, it is easy for us to overlook the message a song is teaching because we can sing it well and we like the way it sounds. However, consider what Paul teaches the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 14:15 What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

Paul is teaching us that we need to understand what it is we are teaching when we are singing. We need to ask ourselves, would I teach what this song is teaching to someone else? Now let me tell you what I am not saying. I am not saying that we should go over every song we sing with a microscope and nitpick it to death. Instead, we need to examine the overall message of the song.

While we sing with understanding it is important that we concentrate on what we are singing and remember that our singing is to come from our hearts. So when we sing, we should sing with emotion knowing that the words we are singing are praising our God. A problem we can develop when we sing the same songs over and over again is that we can get to the point where we are just mouthing the words instead of thinking about them or putting our hearts into them. This is one reason I think it's great when the song leaders teach us new songs so we have new words and new thoughts to think about as we sing.

Another important point that can be made from Eph.5:19 and Col. 3:16 is that it is a command that we sing. Singing to God is not an option and so each of us is to sing if we are capable of doing so. I understand sometimes we have sicknesses and those who cannot speak, but even in these instances, you can concentrate on what is being sung. These two verses also answer the question, who should sing? This can be seen with clarity from the Greek because in both of these verses nearly every word is in the plural form which means that every single person is to sing. God doesn't care if you can't carry a tune, He just wants your singing to come from your heart. So, if there is nothing preventing you from singing, you need to follow this command and sing to God with everyone. Since these verses command that everyone sing, they rule out solos and choirs.

So in our public worship, we are to sing with understanding from our hearts as we sing praises to God and as we teach and admonish one another. Since we have no command or example in the N.T. for us to use musical instruments as part of our worship, we don't use them. We give God what He asked for, which was for us to sing.

It is agreed by countless scholars and historians that musical instruments were not used in the early church. In fact, the earliest mentioning of their introduction didn't come until the 5th or 6th century. In the Catholic Church, Pope Vitalian sanctioned their use for the first time in A.D. 670. This was not done without controversy because notice what the Catholic Encyclopedia says about this,

“...the first Christians were of too spiritual fiber to substitute lifeless instruments for or to use them to accompany the human voice”.

“The rejection of all musical instruments from Christian worship is consistent among the fathers” (New Catholic Encyclopedia 10:106)

The idea of using musical instruments didn't catch on very fast at all and it always caused great controversy and division wherever it was introduced. It wasn't until 1851 and beyond that people started embracing the use of instruments in their worship to God. I want to share with you several quotes from denominational preachers from the past.

John Calvin, founder of the Presbyterian Church: “Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps or the restoration of the other shadows of the law.”(Commentary on the Book of Psalms, Vol, I, p. 539)

John Wesley founder of the Methodist Church: “I have no objection to instruments of music, in our chapels provided they are neither heard nor seen,”

Adam Clark, famous Methodist commentator: “Music as a science, I esteem and admire: but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor.”

Martin Luther: “Martin Luther called the organ and ‘ensign of Baal’.” McClintock & Strong’s Encyclopedia.

Charles H. Spurgeon a well known Baptist preacher: “I would as soon attempt to pray to God with machinery as to sing to him with machinery.”

J.H. Garrison of the Christian Church: “There is no command in the NT, Greek or English commanding the use of the instrument.

At one time, all these different denominations represented here all understood that the use of musical instruments were not to be used in our worship to God. Yet, sadly every single one of one these denominations use these instruments in their worship services today.

Much more could be said about this topic and I could go into great detail about the arguments people try to make to say we can use musical instruments, but I think I have shared enough information to show why we don't use musical instruments in our worship to God in the church of Christ. God commanded us to sing. If He had wanted us to use musical instruments in our worship to Him, He would have commanded us to use them as He did in the O.T., but He did not do that. He simply told us to sing. This falls right in with the idea that God made things much simpler under the new covenant. You will notice that things are less physical and focus more on the spiritual and what comes from the heart, which is why so many of the rituals and physical acts of the O.T were not retaught under the N.T.

Based on the evidence found in the N.T., no one can say that it is wrong to only sing to God, but no one can say with certainty that we can add musical instruments just because they were used under the O.T.

Some seem to think that we in the church of Christ are so strict with the Word of God that we don't under the grace of God or that we live in our lives in fear never knowing if we are saved or lost. Some think we are nothing more than Pharisees.

I can understand why some might think we are this way. When they read in the N.T. about how strict the Pharisees were and how Jesus condemned them for their ways, one might conclude that Jesus would do the same to anyone today who be strict and carefully follow the N.T. teachings, but this view is flawed because Jesus never condemned the Pharisees for keeping or teaching what the Law of Moses taught. No, He rebuked them for not practicing what they preached or for upholding their traditions as if they were Scripture.

Please notice carefully what Jesus says about the Pharisees in:

Matthew 23:1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, ² saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. ³ "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe¹, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. ⁴ "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers.

Before you call someone a Pharisee, it needs to be someone who does not practice what he preaches, and it needs to be someone who is self-righteous and holds his own traditions with being equal or greater than God's Word. Based on Scripture, you cannot rightly call someone who loves God and just want to keep His commands the best he can not be a Pharisee because it doesn't fit. When you look through N.T., you will find it taught over and over again how we are supposed to remain faithful, hold fast, and to abide in the doctrine of Christ.

So, you can never be too strict when it comes to teaching and upholding God's Word because the closer we follow God's Word the more Christ like we will be because Jesus kept the Law of Moses perfectly. He never stumbled one time. We know that we can never reproduce Jesus' perfection, but we can certainly strive for perfection, and we must never stop fighting to remain faithful. Paul puts it this way:

Phil. 3:7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind;

Paul was the hardest working apostles in the Bible. As zealous as he was, he never considered himself perfected. He knew he must continue to grow. He knew that he must continue to fight good fight of faith. As we see in verse 11 and 12, he knew that if he did not continue to grow and continue to press forward, then heaven would not be his home.

This is why we in the church of Christ not only view the Scriptures as something that we do our best to uphold every day, it is why we never stop growing and why we would never say that we have done enough or that we can retire in our fight.

Some confuse this with the idea that we think we can work our way into heaven and that we somehow deserve it, but we don't think that way. We simply give God our best because He gave us His best, which His Son. This is what grace it all about. We didn't deserve His Son, but He give Him to us anyway. Without His Son, we would all be lost and we can never earn our salvation, we can only accept it through an obedient faith.

We in the church of Christ should have the attitude as expressed by Jesus in:

Lk. 17:7 "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat '? 8 "But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink '? 9 "Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not¹. 10 "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"

Since the church is made up of humans, sometimes a few will get confused when it comes to having confidence in our salvation. They will worry themselves to death wondering if they are saved or not, but this is not God's fault, it just that some get confused in the church about this. However, there is no reason for you to doubt your salvation if you are doing your best to live for God according to His Word. With a proper understand of Scripture, you will see how merciful and just our God is. Your soul could not be in any better hands than God's with Jesus being your advocate.

Even though we can say right now that we are not perfected as Paul did, we can also say what Paul did at the end of his life when we fight the good fight of faith. He said:

2 Tim. 4:6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

So, I would hope that people would understand that doing your best to uphold God's Word and respecting every word of it does not mean we are scared to death that we will get one thing wrong and will burn in hell. Instead, it is about loving God and respecting Him enough to give Him our very best by following His words carefully because they are the words of life. The real question becomes, why wouldn't you want to keep all of God's Word to the best of your ability? After seeing the consequences of those who disobeyed God, why would you want to do anything that would disappoint God or cause Him to punish you? Is there really anything negative you could possible say about someone who wants follow Jesus's footsteps by striving to keep all of

commands? I cannot, and I think it is the highest honor we can bestow on our God and it is the strongest way we can show that we love Him. As the Scriptures teach:

Jn. 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments.

1 Jn. 2:3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

I hope these lessons have been helpful and have shown why we believe the way believe and why worship God in a specific way. I have one more lesson I want to share with you in this series, and, I hope you will be able to hear it.

THINGS I WISH PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD ABOUT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST PART 6

This will be our final lesson on things I wish people understood about the church of Christ. I know there are some things I have not covered in this series or will cover in this lesson because there are a lot of things people do not understand about us in the church of Christ, but I believe I have given the foundation behind everything we believe because when you make the N.T. your authority and cling to what it says carefully, then you are going to be unified because the Word of God is called a seed. When you plant a seed without altering it, it will produce the same kind of fruit every time, which is also true with the Word of God. If you follow it without altering it, it will produce a Christian and one that is faithful.

In this lesson, I am going to cover several topics, but I am going to cover them briefly because I want to squeeze in several more things I want others to understand about us as we follow the N.T. pattern.

Many in the religious world think it strange that we in the church of Christ do not teach people to tithe, which means giving 10% of all your earnings to God. The reason many teach this idea of tithing is because they tithed in the O.T., yet people today are not consistent with tithing as it is taught in the O.T. because it was actually more than 10% by the time you add up the different tithes, and the tithes came from the land, which includes things that grow and animals.

Let's look at a few of these verses:

Lev. 27:30 And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the LORD'S. It *is* holy to the LORD. ³¹ `If a man wants at all to redeem *any* of his tithes, he shall add one-fifth to it. ³² `And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD.

Num. 18:21 "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting.

So, the tithes were used to support the Levites.

Deut. 14:22 "You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. ²³ "And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

This is talking about tithing for festivals.

Deut. 14:28 "At the end of *every* third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store *it* up within your gates. ²⁹ "And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who *are* within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

Every 3rd year, we have another tithe that is given for the poor and for the Levities.

So, there is a lot more to O.T. tithing that people are following today, but as you know from our previous lessons, I have clearly shown that we are not under O.T. law, we under the law of Christ. Therefore, we must go by what the N.T. teaches about giving, which is why we don't use the term tithe nor do we teach that people are to tithe today because the N.T. does not teach us to do this.

First, I want to show you that giving is a part of our worship to God.

1 Corinthians 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ² On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. (ESV)

The apostle Paul is commanding each Christian to give on the first day of every week. The ESV and NASV capture the true meaning of this passage because the word "every" is there in the Greek, but for whatever reason, many of the other translations leave this word out.

Christians would come together on the first day of the week and they would worship God together. One of the things they would do was give of their means. They would also partake of the Lord's Supper on that day as well, which is why we see Paul waiting 6 days before he partook of the Lord Supper in:

Acts 20:7 Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

I want to consider the connection between giving on the first day of the week and partaking of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week.

- 1. Giving is commanded (2 Cor. 9:6-7) and so is the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23ff).**
- 2. Giving is an act of worship and so is partaking of the Lord's Supper (Jn. 4:24).**
- 3. We ONLY have one example of giving being done on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and we ONLY have one example of the Lord's Supper being taken on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).**

This is our pattern that we follow from the N.T. We give of our means and we partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week. What amazes me is that many in the religious world will only partake of the Lord's Supper on special occasions, but they never fail to give or to preach that you must give a tithe on the first day of the week. Logically, you cannot separate these two acts of worship because they go hand and hand.

Remember in the O.T. tithing was not done once a week. In fact, some of the tithes were just done once a year, yet you would never hear those who teach about tithing teach that principle.

Now, let's answer the question: How much should we give and what should be our motivation for giving?

We need to understand that we are simply stewards of what God has given us because none of the things we have belong to us because ultimately they belong to God.

1 Corinthians 10:26 for "the earth *is* the LORD's, and all its fullness."

Paul understood this idea and he taught it to Timothy in the following verse:

1 Timothy 6:7 For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

Realizing this will help us to decide how much we should give. Every Christian has to make up their own mind on how much they can give. No one has the right to tell you that you should give 10%, 20% or any other amount because that is between you and God. This is proven by what Paul wrote in:

2 Cor. 9:5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which *you had* previously promised, that

it may be ready as *a matter of* generosity and not as a grudging obligation. ⁶ But this *I say*: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ *So let each one give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

Do you see what Paul is saying? He is saying that you are supposed to put some thought into what you are going to give. Most people have a budget and they have to decide how much money they can spend on house payments, car payments, and telephone bills and so on. If we want to buy something new, we plan for it and then we buy it. Well, Paul is telling us that we should set aside some of our money each week for God that we have determined beforehand. That is what is meant by giving as you purpose in your heart. This means that giving is more than just dropping money into the collection plate. It is something that we have prepared to give beforehand. So, if we come to church and open our wallets or purse to see what we have left over to give to God, then we are not giving as God has commanded. We are just giving God our leftovers.

This is what the people did during Malachi's time. In Malachi chapter 1 we learn that the children of Israel started offering God their leftovers. They were supposed to give God their best animals for sacrifice, but instead, they were giving Him the sick and the lame.

Malachi 1:13 You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' And you sneer at it," Says the LORD of hosts. "And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?" Says the LORD. ¹⁴ "But cursed *be* the deceiver Who has in his flock a male, And takes a vow, But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished -- For *I am* a great King," Says the LORD of hosts, "And My name *is to be* feared among the nations.

Malachi 1:8 And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, *Is it* not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, *Is it* not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" Says the LORD of hosts.

We can learn from this example not to give God our leftovers. Instead, we should give Him what we have purposed in our hearts or else were not much better off than these people in Malachi's time. Paul add this:

2 Corinthians 9:5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which *you had* previously promised, that it may be ready as *a matter of generosity* and not as a grudging obligation. ⁶ But this *I say*: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

This is teaching us that we will reap what we sow. Now, I am not saying what so many do on TBN that if you give 100 dollars your God will give you back 10 or even a 100 fold because giving to God is not a get rich quick scheme. However, some may be blessed with more money, but many times we reap the benefits of giving in many other ways in our lives. So, sometimes we might reap monetarily, while other times we may reap spiritually. We need to keep in mind what Jesus said, “it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).”

Paul also teaches us that we are to give as we prosper (1 Cor. 16:2). The more money we make, the more we can give. We have an example of this in the following verse:

Acts 11:29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.

Each Christian gave according to their ability. Some could give a little, while others could give a lot.

One last point, I want to make comes from Paul saying that we are to give what we purpose in our hearts. Now think about this, if we are to give what we purpose in our hearts, this cannot go with the command to tithe because tithing took no thought because it was 10%. So, when Paul tells us to give what we purpose in our hearts, it completely destroys the idea of tithing for Christians today because we make the decision on how much we give and what we give is between us and God. He knows if we are just giving Him our leftovers or if we are giving Him our best with a cheerful heart. Giving should never be painful, it should make us happy knowing that the funds we give are used to help the kingdom of God grow.

Many in the religious world today think that we in the church of Christ are stuck with 50's mentality regarding women. Some of them think we limit what women can do so we can control them and keep them in their place. They don't understand why we don't allow women to serve as elders, deacons, preachers or to lead us all in prayer.

Paul tells us that no matter what a person's gender or ethnic background is, they are equal in the sight of God when it comes to being saved (Gal. 3:26-28). The Law of Moses was for the Jews, but the Law of Christ is for everyone. Those who choose to embrace it become heirs of God (Gal. 3:7). This equality does not mean that we have the same role within the church.

Paul teaches us that even though we have many members in the one body, we do not have the same function (Rom. 12:5). He illustrates this by comparing the function of the church to that of the human body in 1 Cor. 12:12-27. For instance, if everyone was an eye, there would be no body. If everyone were an elder, there would be no flock. For the church to function properly, it takes both men and women embracing their God given roles (1 Cor. 12:18).

Unfortunately, many people in the religious world have allowed themselves to be influenced by society instead of the Word of God. Because of this, false doctrine has crept into the church and the roles of men and women have been redefined to match that of modern day society. Paul was aware we would do this because he warned Timothy that people would turn away from the truth and find false teachers to teach them what they wanted to hear (1 Tim. 4:2-4).

In the last century, there has been a great push for women to have the same rights as men. There's nothing wrong with that, and I am glad women are being treated as equals in our society. However, today's society has influenced the church to allow women to take the same roles as that of the men. They will say, "*The Bible limited the role of women because that's what the 1st century culture demanded.*" Therefore, they claim that we can adapt how we worship God based on the culture we live in.

Is any of this true? To find out, we need to explore what the Bible teaches about the role of men and women and if we are to adapt the Word of God to our culture.

Many in our society will say, "If a woman cannot function in the same capacity as a man in the church, then she is not an equal." However, this is not true. When you look at the Godhead

(Rom. 1:20), namely the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, Christians would agree that they are equal, yet they have different roles. The Father was the planner, Jesus carried out those plans, and the Holy Spirit was the organizer of those plans. Neither one of them took on the role of the other, yet they were equal.

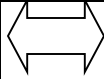
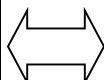
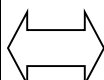

The same is true when it comes to men and women. Men and women have different roles within the church, yet they are still equal to each other. I wish women today would not try to focus on what they see as limitations. Instead, I wish they would embrace the role that God has given them and use it to glorify Him.

Let's take a look at what the Bible says about the role of women. Women were created to be a helper (not a slave) and companion of man (Gen. 2:18). Women can glorify God by being submissive to their husbands (Eph. 5:22). Peter tells us when women do this, they can win their unbelieving husband to the Lord by their conduct without ever saying a word (1 Pet. 3:1-6). This shows us how important it is for women to be good examples to those around them. Not only can she lead her husband to Christ this way, she can lead others as well. She can also do this by how she manages her household (1 Tim 5:14).

Paul makes it clear that a woman should dress modestly and have good works because it will honor God (1 Tim. 2:9-10). Paul praised the women for being great helpers in the church (Rom. 16:1-4; Phi. 4:3). Women can help the church by encouraging other people, contributing their money, visiting the sick, and just helping out in general. Women are to worship God in spirit, in truth (Jn. 4:24) and sing praises to God (Col. 3:16). They should teach their children the Word of God as Eunice and Lois did Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15). We also have an example of a husband and wife team teaching another man privately the Word of God (Acts 18:24-36).

One role that is overlooked these days is the older women sharing their wisdom with the younger women on how to be stronger Christians (Titus 2:3-5). As you can see, there are many God-given roles for women to embrace.

Now let's examine what roles women are not to do according to scripture. Notice the following chart.

1 Corinthians 14		1 Timothy 2
Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak (34) it is a shame for women to speak in the church (35)		I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man but to be in quietness. (12)
And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home (35)		Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. (11)
<i>They are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. (34)</i> thy desire <i>shall be</i> to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. (Gen. 3:16)		For Adam was first formed, then Eve; And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (13-14)

In both of these accounts, Paul is writing about the assembling of the saints (1 Cor. 14:23, 26; 1 Tim. 3:15). It's easy to see that women are not to teach or take a leading role over the men. When Paul states the women are to be silent, this does not mean absolute silence. If it did, women could not so much as sneeze or cough in church. It simply means, she is not to speak or teach in a way that would violate her gender role in a mixed assembly, such as being a public teacher or leading in some way over the men.

Paul gives two reasons women have not been given these roles.

First, there is the order of creation. Adam was formed first, then Eve. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul points out that the head of Christ is God, the head of man is Christ and the head of woman is man (1 Cor. 11:3).

Second, it was Eve who was deceived by the serpent and not Adam. Paul's reasons have nothing to do with culture but is based on how things were done at the beginning of time. To further show that God does not want women to lead or speak over men in the church, Paul teaches that only men are qualified to become elders and deacons in the church (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).

However, it is essential that these men serving as elders and deacons have wives that embrace their God given roles. It's also interesting to note that Jesus did not choose any women apostles, and there are no examples of where a woman was allowed to teach or lead men in the church. In fact, the word "preacher" and "evangelist" are never used in reference to a woman. The only two places we see the word "teach" or "teaching" used in reference to a woman is when they were forbidden to teach over a man (1 Tim. 2:12) and when the older women are told to teach the

younger women (Titus 2:3-4). The Word of God is clear on this, and women should rejoice in the role that has been given to them instead of worrying about the roles that have been given to the men.

So, we in the church of Christ do not control our women or try to keep a 50's mentality, we simply respect the roles that God has given to men and to women and we don't change the teaching of Scripture based on our culture because God's Word does not change just because our culture does. No one with an ounce of sincerity would say that abortion is acceptable today just because our culture has accepted it, but it's easier to take a stand against culture when it's something we don't like. So, let's be humble enough to accept the wisdom of God.

There are so many more topics I would love to talk about, but I want to deal with one last thing. In the first few lessons of this series, I talked a lot about unity and being of one mind regarding Scripture, but those in denominations are quick to point out that we have division within the church of Christ, so who are we to talk about being unified and not dividing ourselves.

To this I would say, you are right, there is some division within the church of Christ because it is made up of humans, but this is not God's fault nor does it justify dividing into different groups. To say that we have no right to preach on unity because some have chosen to either bind things that should not be bound or to loose things that should not be loosed would be like saying that that no one in the church has the right to preach on lying, sexual sins, apathy or any kind of sin because there are always going to be someone in the church who is struggling with sin.

I wish we did not have division in the church, and I wish we could come together and try and reach an agreement based on what the Word of God teaches. Even though there are some disagreements on different topics within the church of Christ that causes there to be several different congregation within the same city, one thing that all of these various groups are in perfect unity on is what is necessary to be saved, which includes being baptized for the forgiveness of our sins.

While there should not be any division between God's people, the fact that this division exist should never stop us from preaching the truth about how God wants us to be one as He and Jesus were one. It is not an unattainable goal to be unified, but it is a challenging one. So, while others can point out that there is some division among those who make up the one church Jesus purchased with His blood, this does not make us disqualified to tell people it is wrong to divide ourselves. We should all be willing to humble ourselves before God and do our best to follow His Word. So, I, and others like me, will continue to preach the same message of unity that the Bible teaches.

I hope you found this series helpful, and I hope these lessons can be used to educate people so they can have a better understanding of what we in the church of Christ believe and teach.

Cougan Collins www.lgchurchofchrist.com