



“And this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.” 1 John 4: 21

Sunday – August 9, 2020

Heart to Heart...

With all the religion around us and denominational churches, how can one know who are the true people of God? Are they all the people of God? Many believe that answer is ‘yes’ but from Jesus the answer is ‘no’. Let’s look at this closely and honestly. First, what one speaks about themselves does not make them right from the Lord’s eyes! What makes anyone right in the eyes of God is lining up with the teachings of Jesus. Just because there is a name on a sign does not make a claim valid: “The Church of Christ.” What makes things valid is because of the teachings of Christ and holding to those teachings with a honest, seeking heart. Jesus said He would build **HIS** church (Matthew 16:18). If we claim we are the church of Christ (literally), it will be built on Jesus and His authority of His teachings. If you want to know the true people of God, you must look to Jesus and the truth He established **His** church upon! The church of the living God is the pillar and the support of the truth (I Timothy 3:15). That’s the first identifier. Notice it’s not ‘*a truth*’ but ‘*the truth.*’ The truth matters to Jesus and those who belong to Him. If people claim to be the people of God, the truth will matter to them. The truth is not a formula one follows but the teaching handed down from Jesus to His apostles as they were sent out preaching/teaching.

How one is saved is the next identifier. People speak of praying the Lord into their hearts, or accepting Jesus as their personal Savior or having some type of spiritual experience as their proof. Jesus said that the preaching of the gospel (which many don’t even know what the gospel is) produces a faith that responds to Him through being baptized for the forgiveness of their sins into His name (Acts 2:37-38). They are the ones who have placed their faith in Him and coming to Him in baptism trusting He will do as He said. Baptism is not a ritual or work. Baptism is not a “special Sunday” or sprinkling. It is faith (one has to be old enough to understand/believe the gospel) in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. They are the saved (Mark 16:15-16). Those are the very words of Jesus! Baptism is a burial of the individual and raising into His newness (Romans 6). This is where is old is put to death and the new is a birth from God (Ephesians 4:20-24).

This church of Christ (I'm speaking literal here, not some name on a sign) believes in elders that watch over the flock, not a board of directors or a central headquarters on earth. There may be places where there are no men who fill the role as given by the Lord (I Timothy 3/Titus 1) but they firmly believe elders are part of the whole. Titus was sent over the island of Crete to appoint elders (always plural) in each congregation (Titus 1:5) holding to the standard that was set by the Lord's instructions given to the apostle Paul. Never was there one elder over the whole. The elders are called shepherds, pastors (the world uses this title for their preachers) and overseers.

The literal church of Christ believes in deacons, men who serve in special capacities and appointed to tasks. They are faithful men and faithful to their task.

The church that Jesus built does not allow women preachers! Women were not allowed to take leading roles in the assembly over men (I Timothy 2:9-12). I know many think in our modern times this is foolishness but the church that Jesus built belongs to Him and He is the One who sets the standard of the truth! If the standard is changed, they are not part of the Lord or His church. Could you imagine the Lord telling His apostles to go out and teach whatever you feel and draw as many people with whatever means you can to get them excited?

The church that Jesus built observes the Supper each first day of the week (I Corinthians 11/ Acts 20:7). Why weekly? Because the existence of the Lord's church depends on His body in our place and His blood to atone for our sins. You want to remember His sacrifice quarterly? Every six months? The saved, the church depends on the blood and our coming together reminds us of who we are and why (I Corinthians 10:15-22). This is about anyone lining up with the teachings of the Lord, holding to His truth, upholding His truth.

How would you know the true church today? Most just blindly follow a friend or 'wowed' by someone preaching or the music but the true church that Jesus built follows Him and His teachings and are 'wowed' by Him alone! They diligently seek His truth and stand in that truth. They hold to the pattern handed down (Jude 3). Otherwise, everything becomes nothing more than a man-made organization, with man-made creeds, man-made worship and man-made authority which is not part of Christ, no matter what anyone might say. Think about it!!!

Brent