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Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth: Sermons by E.R. Harper

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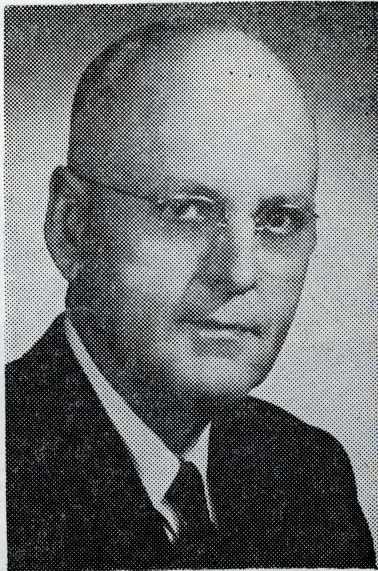
Churches of Christ

salute  you



SERMONS BY E. R. HARPER

HERALD OF TRUTH



E. R. HARPER
ABILENE, TEXAS

THE CHURCH THE PROPHETS SAW

By E. R. HARPER

Radio Sermon No. 131

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August 1, 1954

The most misunderstood question in the religious world is the "church that Jesus built." In Matt. 16:18, the Lord said "Thou art Peter and upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

It is thought by some that this is the first promise ever made to build the church. That until this time Christ had intended only to set up his kingdom on earth. It is taught that his plan to establish his kingdom failed because Israel rejected him as king. Having now been rejected, he decided to build the church; hence the church is a "substitute" for a plan that "failed;" that the church was not in the "original plan and purpose of God" when he sent Christ to this earth.

This would mean of course that God is a weakling, not able to fulfill his promises to man, which would destroy all hopes of his ever being able to fulfill his plans of the future. It also means that the "cross of Calvary" was not in the original plan and purpose of God. This would eliminate the cross and the blood of Christ from God's original purpose and thus the salvation of mankind would not have been contemplated in the "original plans and purposes of God." This true, Christ did not come to earth to die on Calvary and shed his blood for the sins of the world. Therefore, we are forced by this to conclude that the salvation of man was not contemplated in Christ's first advent to the world. If this be true, then God's "failure" to carry out "his original plan," has turned out to the "salvation" of man; this true, man's salvation was by accident.

Do we honestly believe that such a thing did happen? That God was defeated; that the prophets prophesied falsely; and the original plan of Christ's coming to earth, had to be "changed" and a "substitute measure" inaugurated? This is what the modern theory of the "future reign of Christ on earth" would mean. As I pass from this to prove that God's promises did NOT fail, I ask you this one question. If God could not carry out his original plan at the first advent of Christ, How do you know, and what proof do you have that he will be able to make good his promise at the second coming of Christ?

DID THEY FAIL

It now becomes my happy privilege to show you that God's promises did not fail; that the prophets did not prophecy falsely; that the church we have today is, "what the prophets

saw" and is that institution about which they so proudly wrote: that the church is not a "substitute for a plan that failed."

LET THE PROPHETS SPEAK

In 2 Sam. 7:12-14, Nathan, in 1042 B. C. said to David "When thy days are fulfilled and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a HOUSE for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." This "seed" is Christ, Gal. 3:16. Now, after the death of David and before his resurrection, God was going to "establish his kingdom with Christ," and Christ, this seed was to "build a house for God's name." Here we have a "two-fold" prophecy; of the "kingdom of Christ" and the "house of God." Paul says in I Tim. 3:15 the "house of God is the church of the living God." It is an unmistakable truth therefore that the church is an "Old Testament promise" but a "New Testament Institution." Christ, this seed of David, never built but one house for the Lord; THAT was the "Church" as promised in Matt. 16:18. This church is that "house" of 2 Sam. 7:12-14. If not, please tell us what other "house" Christ ever built for God's name?

Is. 2:1-2

In about 740 B. C. Isaiah saw the "kingdom and the church" for he said in Is. 2:1-2, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the MOUNTAIN of the Lord's HOUSE shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the MOUNTAIN of the Lord, to the HOUSE OF THE GOD OF JACOB."

Here again the prophet saw the "two-fold" idea of the "kingdom and the church". Mountain, here, represents "governments," and the "house of God" here, is the "church." So 740 years before Christ came to earth this prophet spoke of the "house of God", which Paul calls the church. Now this "mountain" and this "house of God" were to be established during the same time; the "last days." Peter in Acts 2:17, on Pentecost, after the resurrection of Christ, speaks of that occasion as the "last days;" Paul in Heb. 1:1-2 says that God "hath in these LAST DAYS spoken unto us by His Son." One thing certain: The days in which Peter and Paul lived were the days of which Isaiah spoke. The one thing now to prove is, that, the Mt. of the Lord—the kingdom; and the House of God—the church, were both in existence during the days of Peter and Paul. This done and the doctrine of the "future reign of Christ on this earth," falls apart.

Again, in Micah, 4:1-2, Micah gives almost word for word the prophecy of Isaiah 2:1-2. He foretells of the "Mt. of the Lord" and the "House of the God of Jacob." He sets the date

for their establishment as the "last days," as did Isaiah. We now have Nathan saying to David that God would establish his kingdom with David's seed as king, after David's death and before his resurrection; that David's seed would build a house for God's name; we have Isaiah and Micah both saying the mountain of the Lord, his government, and the house of God—the church, would be established in the "last days"; and we have the word of the Lord saying the days in which Peter and Paul lived were the last days. Question, Was this kingdom in existence at the time of Peter and Paul? Was this "house of God", this "church of Isaiah and Micah" established during the days of these two apostles? If so, then the church of their days was and is the fulfillment of the prophets of the Old Testament and the church becomes a definite part of the original plan and purpose of God. If this be true, and it is, the church is not an accident nor a substitute for a plan that failed. The Kingdom was not "postponed" and Christ will not have to come back to earth to set up his kingdom as "King on David's throne," for that kingdom, set up for David's seed; that house for God's name, to be built by that seed: BOTH were in existence during the days of Peter and Paul.

PROPHECIES FULFILLED

That you may know these prophets did not make a mistake; that their prophecies did not fail, I now present to you the unanswerable truth, that both the kingdom and the church have been in existence since the days of these apostles. In Mark 1:15 Christ having now come to this earth says, "The time IS fulfilled and the KINGDOM of God IS at hand." Question, What time was "fulfilled"? What "kingdom was at hand"? There never had been but ONE kingdom promised and that was the kingdom of 2 Sam. 7; Isa. 2; Micah 4; and Dan. 2:44. It was to be given to Christ. Hence the "time fulfilled" was that spoken of by these prophets of God? If this be not the kingdom of which they spoke, then please give me the prophecy that tells of any other kingdom to be established and given to Christ?

In Matt. 3:2, John the Baptist said, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What kingdom is at hand? Was there another kingdom promised other than the one spoken of by these prophets? To ask that question is to answer it. There was never but one promise and John and Christ both say, the time of its fulfillment was at hand. That is, it was soon to become a living reality. Did John and Christ miss the truth? Is it possible that Nathan, David, Isaiah, Micah, John the Baptist, and Christ all missed it? If they have been mistaken you might as well close your eyes in sleep and banish from your minds the slightest ray of hope of living eternally in the presence of God.

Premillennialism; the future reign of Christ on earth after his second coming, the establishing of the Throne of David with Christ as King at his second coming are all

based upon false assumption, that these prophecies failed. If they did not fail; if these prophets, John the Baptist and Christ knew what they were saying, then that kingdom, of 2 Sam. 7; Isa. 2; Mi. 4; Matt. 3; and Mk. 1, and Daniel 2:44 has already come; is already set up; and Christ has been reigning on David's Throne for some two thousand years.

CHRIST PROMISES THE KINGDOM AND CHURCH

When Christ had been on earth for more than 30 years; during his last year, just before his crucifixion, he promises to "build his church" and to give to Peter the "keys of the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 16:18-19.) I press the question, What church? What kingdom? Is this another kingdom of which the Lord speaks? If so, where is there a prophet that speaks of it in terms showing it to be different to that of the Throne of David? Did they prophesy of two different kingdoms? If so where? No, my friends, this church; this kingdom, this promise of Christ in Matt. 16:18-19 is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises to "establish the Throne of David" and for this seed, the Christ, to build an house for God's name." IF this be not that kingdom, and that house, please tell us of what it is the fulfillment?

IT IS TRUE NOW

Turn with me now to Acts chapter two. It is Pentecost. The apostles begin to speak as the Spirit gives them utterance, Acts 2:4. Peter tells them this is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29; Peter quotes to them this very prophecy of 2 Sam. 7:12-14 as being then fulfilled, declaring that Christ was "raised (at that time) to sit upon the throne of David." He announces the exaltation of Christ at the right hand of God and that he would sit there until his foes become his foot-stool, quoting Psalms 110:1-4 as having been at that time fulfilled. Thus we have on this first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, the definite fulfillment of God's promise to David that he would set his, David's, seed upon his throne. The kingdom of David was then, at that time, set up in Jerusalem, and Christ had been raised to sit upon that throne as king. This places David's Throne, which is Christ's Throne, in heaven and not on earth. This being true, Christ will not return to earth to set up his kingdom, but it now ruling and reigning in heaven on David's throne, with his subjects here on earth preparing for his return to take them home to dwell with him. (1 Cor. 15:24.)

The question now is, Can we find the "church—God's house" also in Jerusalem at this same time? If not, then I am wrong. If so, my lesson today stands unanswerable. The record says in Acts 2:47, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." And Acts 8:1 reads, "And at that time there was a great persecution against the CHURCH which was AT JERUSALEM." Both of these statements were made in A. D. 33. I have therefore found the "two fold ful-

fillment" of the prophecies of the Old Testament. Just as the prophet foretold of the "establishing of the kingdom of David with Christ on the Throne" and Christ, David's seed, building a "house for God's name;" just so, we have here in its fulfillment, namely, David's Throne, with Christ having been RAISED to SIT on that Throne, Acts 2:29-30; and Christ, David's seed, adding the people that day to the "church—the house of God", Acts 2:47; 1 Tim. 3:15. There can be no doubt that this IS the "church the prophets saw"; and that it is the "kingdom" spoken of by the prophets.

In Acts 8:12 Philip is preaching "the Kingdom of God at Samaria". Was the church also in Samaria at this same time? Turn now with me to Acts 9:31 and it says, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee, AND SAMARIA and were edified." Ah, my friends, there can be no doubt about the "two-fold fulfillment" of the "two-fold prophecies" concerning the "kingdom of Christ" and the "house he should build for God's name." for two thousand years they both have been here. We thank God the Old Testament Prophets did not prophesy falsely; that their prophecies did not fail. They came to pass and we have BOTH the "kingdom" and the "church—the house of God". If there is any doubt in your minds that I am correct and that the kingdom upon which Christ was to sit has been set up, I now read to you from Col. 1:13. Paul, speaking of what God has done, says "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated US INTO the KINGDOM of God's dear Son." Who is God's dear Son? It is Christ. There is no answer to this. Here it definitely tells us whose kingdom it is they have in mind in the New Testament. They, at that time, had been "translated into Christ's kingdom", says Paul. What kingdom is this? It is none other than the one promised to David in 2 Sam. 7:12-14; Is. 2:12; Mi. 4:1-2; and Dan. 2:44. If it be another, find the prophecy that foretells of Christ's coming to this earth for any other purpose? It isn't there. But you ask, Brother Harper, can you also find the "church—the house of God" in Colossee at this time? I now read verse 18 of this same chapter. "And he, (Christ) is the head of the body, the CHURCH". Again in verse 24, Paul says, "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions in my flesh for his body's sake, WHICH IS THE CHURCH".

Yes, a thousand times yes, We have BOTH the "kingdom of Christ" and the "church—the House of God," in Colossee. Again we find the "two-fold" fulfillment of the prophets. Yes, the prophets, a thousand years beforehand "saw the church" and the "kingdom" being established at the same time, in the same place, and with the same people. The kingdom of Christ, with Christ on David's Throne, is here now and has been since Pentecost. I close with this one last example. In Rev. 1:9 John says, "I John, who ALSO am your brother and companion in tribulation, AND IN the KINGDOM and patience of Jesus Christ." What kingdom is this John? It is the "king-

dom of Jesus Christ". Friends, what kingdom was promised Christ? It was the "Throne of his father David" and that only. One may say, it is "God's Universal Throne" that Christ is now on. I call for but one verse of the Old Testament prophets, that told of a "universal throne of God" upon which Christ should sit as the "seed of David", which kingdom and throne differ from the Kingdom of 2 Sam. 7:12-14; Is. 2; Dan. 2:44; and Mi. 4:1-2. Find the prophecy that foretells of Christ's coming to die, that he might be "raised to sit upon God's Universal Throne" which throne is not that of the Old Testament prophets. He was never promised the "reign in God's Universal Throne" if he would come to earth and die for the sins of the world. It was on the "Throne of his father David" and John and Paul both declare they were in the "kingdom of Christ" and THAT kingdom is none other than the "kingdom of David". This being true, Christ is now on David's Throne and has been for nearly Two millenniums. Hence gone forever is the thought that he will establish David's Throne on earth, at his second coming. He delivers it up to God at his second coming. 1 Cor. 15:24. The above is as unanswerable as God, for it is the revelation of God.

Our final question here, is that of all the others, Can I find the "church—the house of God" present at this same time of Rev. 1:9? Read just two verses below, in this same chapter and we have it; "What thou seest, write in a book and send it unto the SEVEN CHURCHES which are in Asia."

Yes, the prophets saw what we are today, Not what we shall be after Christ comes again. They said the kingdom of David, with Christ his seed, would be set up AFTER David's death and BEFORE his resurrection. This destroys the theory that the "righteous will be raised, THEN the kingdom will be set up", for it is set up BEFORE David is raised; Isaiah and Micah both said it would be in the "last days" and Peter and Paul declared the days in which they lived to be the "last days" and BOTH of them preached the "kingdom of Christ was at that time set up". Those prophets saw the "house of God" built by Christ, David's seed, in existence at the same time of the kingdom, and Peter and Paul declared the "Church—the house OF GOD" was on earth during the same time.

MEANING OF EACH

Do you know WHY they both had to be in existence at the same time? Here it is. The "church—God's house", is the "people called out of sin to serve God." That is what the church is. The "kingdom is the government that should rule the people called out of sins to serve God." They had to be, therefore, the same people at the same time, and in the same place. God did not leave his people without a form of government. That government is the "kingdom foretold by these prophets." Isn't that simple? Yes, we are the "church the prophets saw"; we are that "kingdom of which they spake".

Are you a member of that church? You enter both the same way. From Acts 2 to Rev. 1, they all believed and all were baptized and the Lord added them to the church and Paul and John both declare they, together with these churches, were all in the "kingdom of Christ." If you will do just what they did, it will make you what it made them. May God bless you and may you obey the will of your Master.

The Church in the Eternal Purpose of God

By E. R. HARPER

Radio Sermon No. 132

Television Sermon No. 26TV

August 8, 1954

If I were to ask the average man or woman who walks the streets of our cities, Does a person have to be a member of the church to be saved, the answer would be, No. He would tell me, the church does not save you: The church is not my Saviour. He has been taught this and has come to believe its implications, therefore millions are not going to church services today and the church has lost its power for good in the society of this nation. The question is not—Does the church save us, but the issue is—Of what is Christ the Saviour? Hence I shall show you that the church is the saved of this dispensation. Protestantism, a confusion of religions, has lost most of its power because of its divided condition. If the Lord's statement in Matthew 12:25-26 means anything when he said "a house divided against itself shall not stand," then the people who profess to believe in the Lord must bring about an answer to the Lord's prayer for "unity" in John 17. He prayed that all who "believe on him through the apostles word" should "be one." Why? "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

Christ knew the sin of division. He pronounced a curse upon a house divided. He said it "shall not stand." This divided condition of the religious world is contrary to the teaching of Christ. There is positively no Bible justification for religious division. Somewhere, someone has missed the truth. The Bible cannot teach all these conflicting doctrines. Intelligent men know this and many of them, unwilling to search for an answer to this situation, turn away in disgust and infidelity is the result. Christ knew this and has commanded us to be "one as he and the Father are one." Deny this; laugh at this! turn away from it if you will, but it stands as a truth that is undeniable.

No business man would be so foolish as to organize his establishment upon the divided conditions that we accuse our Lord of building his church. For a business to send out two or three hundred different salesmen, giving each a different story to the same buyers, concerning the same product, would

throw his business into bankruptcy. Is it possible that our Lord, who came to save the world, would so operate his affairs that it would cause all this religious confusion in the world, with all these different religions, all claiming to come from God? Paul says God is not the "author of confusion." I Cor. 14:33. Think this over prayerfully!

WHAT IS WRONG?

You are ready to ask me, What is wrong? What is our trouble? I believe it can be answered in one simple sentence: The world does not understand "God's Eternal Purpose for the Church." If men understood the "Church In the Eternal Purpose of God," they would not say such things as, "you are saved out of the church;" The "church is nonessential to our salvation": That "one church is as good as another." They would know that man can't be saved out of the church the Lord built, and that only the church he built holds any promise to man. I pray with you that you do not think hard of me for what I am saying, for, I have nothing against my friends who differ with me. I know some one is wrong; that God is not teaching me to preach one thing, and you to preach just the opposite. It is possible for two men to be wrong about a certain thing, but it is impossible for both to be right, when they contradict, the one the other, as we do in religion. When we are willing to be honest and frank enough to admit this truth and begin trying to find out from the Bible just who is right, it is then I have no fear, for we are preaching only the truth of this book, the Bible. Man either has to be in the church, to be saved, or he does not. If I teach he "has to be in the church to be saved" and you teach he does "not have to be in the church to be saved," common intelligence is forced to conclude that both of us just cannot be right.

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE

Paul in Eph. 3:3-11 in speaking of the grace of God given to him says, "By revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, AS it is NOW revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; THAT the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body (the church) and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."

Here we find what Paul calls the "mystery in other ages"; that is, before the church was established; back during the Law of Moses. What was that "mystery"? It is not "how men are saved." This "mystery that is now revealed" was that the "Jew and Gentile" should be "fellowheirs"; of the "same body"; and "partakers of the promise" in Christ, "by the gospel." This being true, then the "body of Christ" which Paul calls the "church" in Eph. 1:22-23 is not an accident; it is not a substitute for a plan that failed; it is the fulfilment of the

plan God had in mind when he sent Christ to this earth to die on Calvary. It is in this "body the church" that both were to become "fellowheirs" and "partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel". This being true and it is; "salvation" to all men can only be enjoyed in this "body" which body—the church— was a part of this "mystery" of the "other ages", "now" revealed in its fullness. This truth is as eternal as God for it is his way of uniting both unto God in Christ, "by the Cross".

Paul in explaining why he was called of God says, "That I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the MYSTERY, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; To the intent that NOW unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the CHURCH the manifold wisdom of God, according to the ETERNAL PURPOSE which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord". (Eph. 3:10-11.)

Friends, here we have my subject almost word for word. Paul declares in this letter that the "church" which was a part of this "mystery now revealed", was in the mind of God from the beginning; that it was a part of the "eternal purpose of God" when he sent Christ to this world. One thing we now know; Premillennialism which teaches that God sent Christ to set up an earthly kingdom only; which theory denies the church was a part of the original plan and purpose of God. That theory has been defeated forever, for the apostle of our Lord has declared the "church" to be a part of this "mystery in other ages". Paul says it was in the "mind of God from the beginning"; and last that it was the "eternal purpose of God" that "by the church", the "manifold wisdom of God" should be made known "unto the world". We are forced to conclude therefore, that the church as well as the Kingdom is the direct fulfillment of the "eternal purpose of God" and that he established the church that by it and in it, God's wisdom might be manifested AND that both, "Jew and Gentile should be fellowheirs in this one body—the church". This true we are forced to conclude that salvation to the entire world, by Christ after his death, is in the church and that only.

We are now made to wonder why the Lord said in Matthew 16:18-19, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it", if man doesn't have to be a member of it? Why was he so determined to build his church, IF it is a nonessential institution? Why his determination that the "gates of hell shall not prevail against it", if it has no vital place in the salvation of man? May I suggest that it might be advantageous to you and your family to investigate this lesson today very seriously? Suppose you can't be saved out of the church? Then what?

Since the Lord was determined to "build it"; Since it is

the fulfillment of the "eternal purpose" of God in sending Christ to earth; since Paul teaches that in it both Jew and Gentile are to be "partakers of the promise in Christ", do you not think that you and yours should strive to find out just how you may become members of this body—the church, in which all the world is reconciled unto God by Calvary?

THE BLOOD-BOUGHT POSSESSION

One is ready to say, "But I am saved by the blood of Christ and the church has nothing to do with my salvation." Will you get your Bible and read with me Acts 20:28? Paul says "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the CHURCH of God, which he PURCHASED with his own blood". Ladies and gentlemen: It is the CHURCH that is bought with the BLOOD OF CHRIST. It is the CHURCH that is the BLOOD BOUGHT POSSESSION OF CHRIST. That is why you must be IN THE CHURCH to be SAVED by the blood.

Peter says in I Peter 1:18 "for as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; BUT by the PRECIOUS blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot". Here we see plainly that man lost, cannot, in any condition of his existence, be saved or redeemed from his sins, by the payment of gold or silver or any corruptible thing, even though his "tradition" may so teach. He is saved, redeemed only by the precious blood of Christ. This should be final, for it came from Peter to whom the Lord said "whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven". He forever bound on earth that, only the blood of Christ can redeem or free man from his sins. Remember Peter taught you that you cannot buy the release of your loved ones from sin; You must bring them to the blood of Christ.

The question now is, how is man bought or saved by the blood of Christ? It is by becoming a member of his church, for it is the CHURCH that is bought with his precious blood. When you become a part of this "blood bought possession of Christ—the church" it is then you are "redeemed from sin" and "saved" by the blood of Christ". Friends, suppose I have \$20,000. I purchase a house with this money as the Lord purchased the church. Tell me, how do I receive any benefit from the money? I have to use the house. If I never lived in it; if I never used it, I have wasted my money. This, all can see! Just so; if Christ gave his blood for the church—his house, and the Bible says he did; then man must get into the church Jesus built to be among the number redeemed by the blood. If this is not true then Christ wasted his blood upon a "nonessential house—the church". To declare the church of our Lord, nonessential is the same as declaring his blood

nonessential for his blood was the purchase price. From this we again see that the "eternal purpose of God" in building the church was that he might save the world for his own "blood bought possession". Can you afford NOT to be part of this church "bought by the blood of Christ", when you stand before God at the judgment? I beg you to think this over.

RECONCILIATION, EPH. 2:16

God's purpose in building his church is further understood as we read Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. In this letter he teaches plainly that man can't be saved out of the church, the body of Christ. I plead with you to listen prayerfully to Paul's letter. You can't afford to make a mistake for the destiny of your soul and that of your family depends upon knowing the truth about the church that Jesus built. In Eph. 2:16 Paul teaches that Christ died "That he might reconcile both—that is Jew and Gentile—unto God in ONE BODY by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." Not three hundred bodies; just one body and Paul says the body is the church. We must conclude therefore that Calvary and the church are a part of the "eternal purpose of God" by which he might reconcile all people unto God.

I know this is foreign to what you have been taught; but when the Bible says "reconciliation unto God by the cross" is IN this ONE BODY, and that body IS the church, Eph. 1:22-23, then it becomes an unanswerable truth that man, who is accountable unto God so long as he lives out of the church—this body of Christ, is lost. The only person who can and will be saved is the person "reconciled unto God by Calvary". If you and your children die not reconciled unto God, I think you know you have have to be lost. Since your Bible declares in so many words that reconciliation unto God is IN this ONE BODY—the church, it can mean but one thing, namely; the "Church in the Eternal Purpose of God" was planned that all might be reconciled unto God, Eph. 2:16. My friends, THIS can't be answered, for where "reconciliation unto God by Calvary" is found, there is where "salvation is enjoyed" and Paul says plainly that BOTH are "reconciled unto God IN ONE BODY" and that Body IS the church, Eph. 1:22-23.

THE HOUSE OF GOD

This truth is further emphasized by Paul in I Tim. 3:15 where he teaches the "house of God", is the "church of the living God", the "pillar and the support of the truth". Paul WHAT is the CHURCH? It is the HOUSE OF THE LIVING GOD. May I ask you my good friends, just WHAT IS a man's HOUSE? Is it the brick and mortar that go into your building, or is it your family? Here, whatever the HOUSE of God is, THAT is what the CHURCH of the living God is. If I can prove to you that the term "house" in the Bible, when used as it is here, refers to a man's family, then I have once for all

established the unanswerable truth that to be saved one has to be in the "church of the living God".

I know you are being taught that man does not have to be a member of the church that Jesus built to be saved, but my good people if the "house of God" is his "family"—and that house IS the CHURCH, then the saved are in the church. This being true then you can't just fall down at your radio to be saved. You will have to do whatever is necessary to become a part of the church of the Living God—his house. Now if Paul wrote the truth to Timothy, then no matter what man may say, God's house—his family IS the CHURCH of the living God. Paul wrote this guided by the Holy Spirit. It is time to surrender traditions of the centuries past, and for the sake of the children that are yours and those yet to live, let us learn what the Bible DOES TEACH.

Somehow we must get the world to go back to the Bible for the instructions concerning these vital truths. There is no place for prejudice in my heart when it is my soul and that of my children that must stand before the judgment bar of God. The Lord said, "you shall know the TRUTH and the TRUTH shall make you FREE". Error, if you have accepted it, though you may think it right, can never free you.

Let us now see what the term "house" means in the Bible. In Acts 10:2 it says Cornelius "feared God with all his HOUSE". In Acts 16:32-33 we have the following expressions concerning the Jailer. It says "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord and to all that were in his house". After the Jailer washed the stripes of God's men, and AFTER he and his house—his family, were baptized, the Bible says in verse 34 "He brought them into his house, set meat before them, believing in God with all his HOUSE". This "house" was called "believers" AFTER they were baptized"; and not BEFORE. No infants here for all his house could "believe." In Heb. 11:7 it says, "Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

Our question is now answered beyond all refutation. We see from these scriptures a man's house is his family. Now a man's family is composed of his children. That being true God's house in I Tim. 3:15 which Paul calls the church, IS God's family and his family is composed of his children. We are forced to conclude, therefore, that man, who is accountable unto God, so long as he lives out of the church—God's family, is lost. This has to be right. The very word itself means the "called out of the world to serve God". The church IS the saved of this earth.

SAVIOUR OF THE BODY—THE CHURCH

Last I read to you Paul's statement in Eph. 5:23 where he says Christ is the "Saviour of the body." Paul says this "body IS the church", Eph. 1:22-23. Since Christ built the church; since he bought it with his own blood; since Paul teaches the church is the institution in which both Jew and Gentile are

reconciled unto God by the cross; since it is in this body they both become "fellowheirs" and "partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel"; since the church is the "house of God—his family—his children: since, the church was in the "Eternal Purpose of God" that by the "church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to all the world"; and since Paul declares Christ is the "Saviour of this body—the church", do you not think this subject is of vital importance to you and your family? Every one of the above statements I have read to you today are from your Bible. The Bible is our only guide from earth to the judgment. It is divinely inspired

Will you not do what they did in the days of the apostles to be added to this church by our Lord? Paul says "For by one Spirit are we all baptized INTO ONE BODY", I Cor. 12:13. Every account of the church in the Bible where it is given in detailed form shows they had the gospel preached to them; they believed it, and were baptized. That baptized group in every city WAS the SAVED of that city and no one else. May God bless you and keep you and may you and yours obey the gospel and let the Lord add you to his church. He will not make a mistake for he built it. He knows which one, for the church was in the "Eternal Purpose of God" that by it and in it both Jew and Gentile might be "Reconciled unto God by the Cross".

Membership in the Church Christ Built

By E. R. HARPER

Radio Sermon No. 133

Television Sermon No. 27TV

August 15, 1954

If I were to ask the average man I meet if he were a member of the church our Savior built (Mt. 16:18), the answer would be, "Mr. Harper, there is no way to know which church IS the church our Saviour built." The usual question is, of what "branch of the church are you a member." Now when this question is asked, men begin to tell you they are members of this denomination or that, claiming all these denominations as "branches of the church the Lord built." The common conception of the church the Lord built is that, "all these different denominations" make up the "one body, or church," of Mt. 16:18 and Eph. 2:16. The excuse given for having so many different denominations is, That no one can tell which church is the church Christ established. Since therefore no one can know which church that is, they argue we have all these various denominations as branches of this church, and they make up this "one body—one church."

Now my friends I have no disposition to wound the feel-

ings of you who have been so good to listen to our programs all these many months and years but will you let me discuss this question with you from my heart, knowing I am doing so because I love you, and I am anxious for you to see what we know to be the truth? May I ask you some questions based upon the promise made by our Saviour in Math. 16:18, where he says, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH." Our first question is, Did the Lord build that church? Did he make good his promise? We all know he did for we read of that church all through our New Testament. My next question is, Did he FAIL to tell us HOW we could become members of THIS church? (1) Did Christ "give himself for the church?"; (2) did he become the "Saviour of the body—the church?"; (3) has he "sanctified and cleansed the church", Eph. 5:23-26; (4) did he "purchase it with his own blood," Acts 20:28; (5) did he become the "head of the church", Eph. 1:22-23; (6) did he become the "foundation of the church", I Cor. 3:11; (7) has he chosen the church to be "the bride of Christ", Rev. 21:9; (8) have the "spirit and the bride—the church" invited whosoever will to come, Rev. 22:17; (9) and is Christ coming back to present this CHURCH to himself as a "glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle", Eph. 5:27; and then FORGOT to tell us how we may become members of this church?

My good people do you really think Christ would do us that way? Do you believe Christ built the church, became its Saviour, bought it with his blood, had his Bride—the church to "invite whosoever will to come", sanctified it and cleansed it, getting it ready for his return, and then failed in the most important part of it all; TO TELL US HOW WE KNOW BEYOND ALL DOUBT WHEN WE HAVE BECOME MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH HE BUILT?

My next question is, How did he expect people to become members of this church IF he FORGOT to tell us HOW we may KNOW BEYOND ALL DOUBT when we have become members of HIS CHURCH and not some SUBSTITUTE? You will remember Christ said in Math. 15:13, "Every plant my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be ROOTED up". Again the Psalmist said in Psalms, 127:1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it". These truths of warning in the Bible point out to us the seriousness of knowing that what we are in, IS what the Lord built. If every plant our heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up"; if the "Lord and Him only, must build the house", else we labour in vain, isn't it time to begin asking ourselves the question, Did the Lord build the house—the church—of which I am a member? This question becomes the most vital question of all time to every accountable soul. You MUST NOT make a mistake and get into something the Lord did not build.

That there will be false religions arise to confuse the world cannot be denied. Paul wrote Timothy saying in 2 Tim.

4:3, that the "time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned into fables". Paul says to the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:29, "For I KNOW this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter among you, not sparing the flock, also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them". When Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica about the second coming of Christ he said in 2 Thess. 2:3-4, "Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come except there come a FALLING AWAY FIRST, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition". Now notice his description of this character that is called this "man of sin—this son of perdition". Paul says, he, "opposeth and EXALTETH himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the TEMPLE of God, shewing himself that He is God." Now any church who allows her men to be referred to in any manner as God, or "Lord God, our Father, etc.", cannot be the church of which Paul was a member.

Again in this same chapter he says, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, and then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the LOVE of the TRUTH, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness". This, is a false religion that should arise; it was already, at that time sowing its seeds but its time had not yet come said Paul in verse 7. This religion would have one to sit, in what they called the "temple" or "church of the Lord", and have the people ascribe unto him the attributes of God and exalt himself as such among the people on earth. This religion would claim to perform miracles, would come with all power and signs and wonders" and with such "deceivableness of unrighteousness" would deceive the people, causing them to hate the truth of God. Paul says of such, "The Lord shall consume him with the spirit of his mouth at his coming."

Now I know this is not the church of which I am a member for we do not claim such power nor do we have any man sitting over the churches of Christ on earth claiming for himself to be God Incarnate; or having us call him "Lord God our Father". We accept but one Father and that is our God, Mt. 23:9. We own but one head and that is Christ our Lord, Eph. 1:22-23. So when religions come to you today claiming to be this one church of which the Bible talks and they teach

the above you had better know if that church is what Paul "warned you against", here. I know there will be false religions next because Paul in writing to Timothy in 1 Tim. 4:1-4 says to him: "The Spirit spaketh EXPRESSLY, that in the latter times (we are in that now) some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of Devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; (listen now) forbidding to MARRY, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which BELIEVE AND KNOW THE TRUTH".

Now, I know the church of which I am a member is not the false religion Paul is warning against here, for we do not "forbid" persons to marry, nor do we "command anyone to abstain from meats". Paul says the reason these of 1 Tim. 4 have done that, is, they do not "believe" nor do they "know the truth". His argument is very simple; when one "believes and knows the truth" he will NOT teach the above. To forbid people to marry; to command them to abstain from meats, Paul says is following "seducing spirits"; "doctrines of Devils" and is "speaking lies in hypocrisy", and Paul was an ambassador for Christ, 2 Cor. 5:20. You can now begin to see why, it is so necessary that Christ should give us the plan by which we may know when we are members of the church he built, else we become entangled with some of these false religions, and though honest, we become deceived by them.

Now you and I, all of us must study God's revelation to KNOW that the institution of which we are members is not ONE of these FALSE RELIGIONS. Another thing, we should not think hard of men for preaching as I am today for I want you to know that you are saved. I want you and yours to be in that church, Paul says in Eph. 5, Christ is going to "present unto himself." Friends: you and your family MUST NOT MISS BEING IN THAT CHURCH WHEN OUR LORD COMES BACK AGAIN: and he IS coming again.

Our last part of this discussion on the importance of KNOWING we are in the church the Lord built is found in Paul's warning to the churches in Galatia in Gal. 1:8 where he says, "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have received, let him be accursed". Now my good people, think of your speaker today, as you will, but remember it was not he who wrote this Bible. It is God's word. It has lived through all the ages with the greatest infidels of the world spending their fortunes and their energies to destroy this Book from the earth. They have died. This grand old Book, the Bible, they despised, still lives with all the freshness, its beauty, and its hopes, for a better, a richer, and a sweeter life, both here and in the world

to come. You had better believe its sacred pages and be admonished by its warnings.

HOW ENTER?

To our final question, May We Know When We are Members of the Church Christ Built, I now give the remaining part of our time. In Math. 16:18 the Lord said, "I will build MY church". This is SINGULAR. He built BUT one. Paul, in Eph. 2:16 says we are "reconciled unto God in ONE body by the cross". In 1 Cor. 12:20 Paul says there is "BUT one body". He says plainly in Eph. 1:22-23 this "body" IS the "church". Our only conclusion can be, there is just ONE CHURCH built by Christ.

Since therefore Christ built ONLY ONE, I MUST know HOW to get into THAT church and NOT a SUBSTITUTE. I am interested only in the one CHRIST built and NOTHING else. I am not interested in something called a "branch" for Christ never promised, "I will build branches of my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against THEM—the BRANCHES". He said, "I will build my CHURCH"—SINGULAR. Now my good people, if I am not in THAT church Christ built, my church membership is worthless, so far as receiving the blessings promised to those in the church Christ built. This CAN'T be wrong, nor can it be answered. But one may be ready to say, What about the "vine and the branches" in John 15:1-6. Here the "branches" are "men" and NOT warning, factious denominations. Read it personally and you will see.

Now the answer to our question, May We Know We Are Members of This Church our Lord Built?, is very simple. Turn with me now to Acts, chapter two (2). It is Pentecost, following the glorious resurrection of our Lord. It is the "third hour of the day" which is 9 o'clock, verse 15. This was on what we call, Sunday morning. The apostles have gone to the city of Jerusalem as commanded by their Lord as recorded in Luke 24:49-53. The Holy Spirit, promised by Christ to guide them into all truth has now come upon them, verses 4 and 33. The Spirit begins speaking through these men; this strange event is "noised abroad" says your Bible; the "multitude came together" and "every man heard them speak in his own language". They were "all amazed"; some "doubted", while others "mocked" accusing them of being drunk. Peter, "standing up with the eleven" begins their defense by declaring unto them "these men are not drunken as ye suppose". Instead, "THIS is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel". He now begins his proof to Israel that the time spoken of by the prophets was being fulfilled THAT VERY DAY. Having declared unto them that this was the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32, he begins his defense of the truth that Christ was the fulfillment of God's promises through the ages past. He calls to their attention the miracles of Christ performed before their

very eyes; he points them to the crucifixion which they had beheld, many of them; he now declares the glorious resurrection of Christ; he quotes the prophecy of Nathan to David in 2 Sam. 7:12-14 as being at that time fulfilled in the "resurrection of Christ" to "sit on his, David's Throne", verses 29-31; he, in no uncertain terms, announces that Christ, at that very time had "been exalted at the right hand of God", having been "raised to sit on David's throne" and would sit there to rule and to reign "until his enemies become his foot-stool, verse 33-35. This was a quotation from Psalms 110:1-4, showing its fulfillment at that very time. Ah, my friends, Christ with his church was the fulfillment of all the dreams and promises of the ages past. Now, after this, in verse 36 Peter says to them, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God had made this same Jesus, whom we crucified, BOTH LORD and Christ". Lord means "ruler" and "Christ", God's anointed. Hence THIS CHRIST that hung on Calvary, not another, has now been made, "BOTH LORD and Christ."

WHAT THEY DID!

What was the effect on this audience? They were pricked in their hearts and asked these men "What shall we do"? Ladies and gentlemen, their failure to accept the answer given here is the cause of our trouble today. Many will not believe it. Peter, guided by the Spirit said, "repent AND be baptized EVERY ONE OF YOU in the name of Jesus Christ FOR the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost". Verse 41 says, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand (3000) souls". Verse 47 says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved". Question, To WHAT church did the Lord add them? He said in Matt. 16:18, "I will build MY CHURCH". Now in less than one year he is "adding to the church". Honestly, To what church did the Lord add these in Acts 2? There can be but ONE answer. He added them to the church he built. There was ONLY ONE. What had they done? They had "believed Peter's sermon of the Christ on David's Throne; they had repented of their sins; they had been BAPTIZED, EVERY ONE OF THEM, FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS". Only those who had done this were added by the Lord to HIS CHURCH. This is UNANSWERABLE. Our trouble today is, much of the religious world, denies that men have to obey this command to "repent" and be baptized FOR the REMISSION of sins" as given by Peter. They are teaching "salvation by faith only" or by any method that will leave out this command by the apostle Peter. He said, "repent AND be BAPTIZED EVERY ONE of you—FOR REMISSION OF SINS". That did not leave out one single person who asked that question. There can be no excuse for misunderstanding this simple command in Acts 2:38. Another thing; ONLY those who did this were called "believers", verse 44. Only those who "repented and were baptized for remission of Sins", were said to

be "saved" and have "remission of sins" verses 38 and 47. Now this number and this number ONLY, who had been "baptized FOR REMISSION OF SINS" as penitent believers in Christ, were added by the Lord to HIS CHURCH, Verse 47. Will you find any other group here in Acts chapter two, other than these who were called the "believers—the saved— or members of the church our Saviour built"?

Now friends, THIS is what churches of Christ all over the world believe and teach. This is what we are begging you to believe and obey. If you will do this is will unite us all and make us just what it made them. All these were "together", verse 44. There were no warring, conflicting denominations as we have today, and EVERY BODY KNOWS there were not. Name JUST ONE church there Other than the church Jesus built. Where have all these others come from? Now just what is the trouble now? Simply this: Some body is refusing to preach what Peter did upon this occasion. Does your church teach men to "repent AND be baptized—for the remission of sins"? If not it is not the church Jesus built for the preachers of that church taught me they had to "repent and be baptized EVERY ONE OF THEM, FOR the REMISSION of sins." One may be ready to say, I can't understand when "remission of sins" is to come in Acts 2:38. Suppose I were to say to you, "repent and be baptized, every one of you for \$100,000, could some preacher cause you to misunderstand when you were to receive the \$100,000? You would not stop to argue about "for". You would be certain that you made no mistake and you would do what I commanded. If you will be as honest with your soul as you would with this check, you can understand Acts 2:38 also and having done what it says, the Lord will add you to His church. It is a mental impossibility to misunderstand what they did here to be added to the church by our Lord. They believe what Peter preached; they repented of their sins; and they were baptized FOR the REMISSION OF SINS and were added to the church by our Lord. Of what church were they members? The CHURCH THE LORD BUILT. There is but one answer to this. I know I am a member of this same church for I have done the very same thing. My brethren have done just this.

Will you not today, believe in this Christ of Calvary? Will you not repent of your sins? Will you not be BAPTIZED for the REMISSION of YOUR SINS, as were they and let the Lord add you to his church as he did them? This can't be wrong for 3000 did this very thing on that day and were added to the church Christ built. May God bless you and keep you and may you and yours come now obeying this sermon of the apostles of the Lord and become only a Christian, a member of His Church.

THE CHURCH HER FINAL DESTINY

By E. R. HARPER

Radio Sermon No. 134

Television Sermon No. 28TV

August 22, 1954

Two travelers, who fancied they were abundantly able to take care of themselves entered a railway coach when the train was being made up. They found comfortable seats and had dropped into conversation when a porter looked in and told them to go forward. What is the matter with this coach? they asked. "Nothing", he grinned, "only this one ain't coupled on to anything that will take you anywhere".

Now my friends, this "train—the Lord's church" is bound for the promised land. Its conductor is our Lord. He is delivering it to his Father at the heavenly station. This is her final destiny. You better be certain therefore that the "coach" you are in is "coupled on". We have over 300 different denominations claiming to be "coaches—or branches", of the church the Lord built. They think they are "coupled on" and going "somewhere". Had you ever stopped for just a moment to give serious concern to this argument that is made to justify all this religious division in the world? It is this: They claim, no one can tell which is the church the Lord built, hence these different denominations have come into existence claiming to be "branches—coaches" of this church—this heavenly train. They all claim to be "coupled on". Men and women have come in, sat down, and now comfortably satisfied, begin to work in these "branches—these coaches" expecting to reach their heavenly destination just as these men, sitting in the coach "coupled on to nothing", expected to safely arrive at their final destination. You must be "coupled on."

As I pass from this may I ask you this vital question concerning these churches being branches of the church the Lord built? You know to be branches of the church the Lord built they would have to "coupled on" to his church somewhere. If no one knows which is the church the Lord built? If no one can find the church the Lord built. How can you know the denomination you are in is "coupled on" to his church and "going to the right place"? You will have to find the church the Lord built before you could prove that the denomination you are in is a branch of his church. But if you found the church itself then there would be no justification for the branch. The moment the true church is found, gone are all the excuses for having branches of the church for you would have the church itself. No, John 15 does not establish the right to have denominations as branches of the true church for in John 15 the branches are "men"; not denominations. May I ask you, who use John 15 as justification for religious denominations, to give me the names of the various denominations that existed during the days of the apostles and what they taught? Tell me to which branch did the different apostles and churches in various cities belong? Ah, friends; you know that no such condition existed during the days of the apostles!

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THE CHURCH HER FINAL DESTINY

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Our Lord prayed that all "be one" as "He and the Father were one", John 17:21; Christ condemned a "house divided" saying it could not stand, Math. 12:25; in I Cor. 1:10 Paul admonished them that there "be NO DIVISIONS among you"; in I Cor. 3:3 Paul says "For ye are yet carnal; for where as there is among you envying, and strife, and DIVISIONS, are ye not carnal and WALK as men"? From this it is plainly seen that Christ and his apostles taught "unity" and NOT "division" and pronounced a curse upon a divided people, saying, they are carnal and "walk as men".

WHAT IS OUR TROUBLE?

You are ready to ask, What is the trouble? My good people someone has just missed the truth of God's book and they are "walking as men". Not willing to admit that someone is wrong; trying to say every body is right, has brought us to this state of confusion and compromise and now the importance of the church is lost to the minds and hearts of most people. When a man tells you, he is a member of the true church, and NOT a branch, men turn from him. The reason for this is very simple. If the church of which he is a member is the church the Lord built that places the others in a rather bad light for they could not be the true church. Now instead of trying to find out what is wrong and to see if he is in the true church, we usually just say, That fellow is narrow; I will never hear him again. Just remember the Lord said in John 8:32, "You shall know the TRUTH and the TRUTH shall make you free". I am either a member of the church the blessed Lord built or I am not.

Can't you see my friends that the Lord would not build churches and send them into a world of lost sinners having one group to teach salvation by faith only and another to deny this; one to teach the impossibility of apostasy and another to deny it; one church to teach baptism essential to salvation and another church to deny it; one branch to preach that sprinkling is baptism and still another branch of the church to deny this; and on and on until we have all these hundreds of denominations all teaching the people these conflicting doctrines? Do we not realize that no business man would do such a thing? Then why accuse our Lord of so confusing the world that they do not know which church is his or what he wants man to do or believe that he might be saved. Surely, he has as much intelligence as the average business man.

If we would just admit that some one has missed the truth and that those who have, are in danger of being lost, then go to work honestly striving to follow just the teachings of our Bible, doing and being only what our New Testament authorizes, we would know that we are in the church the Lord built.

There should be no excuse for not being in his church

for he has given us the way in such plain, and simple terms.

In Acts 2:1-47 they believed Peter's message; they repented of their sins; and were baptized for the remission of sins. Now the Lord added these to his church. Philip in Samaria, Acts 8:5-12, preached unto them the Christ. They heard him; they believed his message, and were baptized. Thus began the church in Samaria, Acts 9:31. When Paul went to Corinth, Acts 18:8, he preached to them the gospel, I Cor. 15:1-2, they "heard him, believed him, and were baptized". They formed the church in Corinth, I Cor. 1:1-4. Paul went to Ephesus, Acts 19:1-10. Finding certain disciples he inquired of them, had they received the Holy Spirit. They had not heard of the Holy Spirit. He asked them, "unto what then were ye baptized? They said, "unto John's Baptism". He taught them the purpose of John's baptism, showing them it was not Christ's baptism. They surrendered therefore the Baptism of John the Baptist which preceded the Baptism of Christ, and were "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus". After their baptism in the name of Christ, we read of the church in Ephesus.

In every example of the church being established in the first century it was by preaching the Christ of the gospel; by believing in this Christ; by repenting of their sins; and every one of them being baptized. When Paul wrote to the Christians in these cities he wrote to the church and no group was ever referred to in these cities as the saved, the children of God, or saints of God, until after they were baptized becoming members of the church. Friends, can't you see that in every place where the apostles of our Lord went preaching the gospel, they preached the very same thing; and the people were all of the same faith and order? What other groups were called the saved or Christians in Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus, or Jerusalem other than those of the churches in these cities? Ladies and gentlemen, The saved in every city was the church. There was not, nor could there be, any saved people out of the church the Lord built for the church is the saved.

I believe if you will take time to read the report of the growth of church in America you will find that the church of Christ is the fastest growing religious organization in our nation. You may ask why is this so, and how are we doing it and why do we want people to come into the church? It is very simple. First we adhere strictly to the Bible, therefore we have a definite plea to present to the world. Second, we know what we believe and are able to present it with conviction, supported by the Bible. Last, we ask men to do nothing, be nothing, nor to practice anything in our worship that is not found in the Bible. When you stand on the Bible and

that only and will not surrender, not even one point of her teachings, no man can face such a stand long.

After while men are attracted by such faith in the Christ of Calvary that will cause men to adhere so fundamentally to his word. The Bible says in 2 Tim. 3:16-17 that the scripture given by inspiration is able to make "the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnishing him unto all good works". This true, we need no modern revelations nor do we need any church traditions. What more could they do than make us perfect or complete in Christ? Jude says in verse 3 "earnestly contend for the faith which was ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS". The American Standard Version says, "once for all delivered unto the saints". This means but one thing: It was revealed to the saints once and will never be again. Therefore all revelations coming after this "faith"—"once for all delivered" have to be false and all traditions, not being a part of this revelation we repudiate. We must stand on this "faith once for all delivered unto the saints". A faith like this shines on the horizon of our religious world as a beacon light, and stands as the Rock of Ages in the midst of a babylon of religious confusion. Such faith shall continue to grow for we have the promise of God that his "word will not return unto him void". Isa. 55:11.

HOW

Many are astonished that we are growing so rapidly without some kind of Ecclesiastical Earthly Headquarters with power to direct all our activities. We need no such super organization on earth for it would only serve to confuse us. We have our orders from our King who sits today on the throne of his Father David and who has left us, the New Testament, his will, by which we are guided. We possess the ability to understand his directions without having some man, claiming infallibility, to direct our affairs. We believe there lives not a man on earth who will stand publicly in defense of his doctrine and by the order of his church, dare speak from the rostrum, as the "voice of infallibility". If he is infallible, why does it take months and years, and sometimes centuries for this infallible voice to decide what is truth and what is not. Infallibility could speak from the rostrum and it be unanswerable. The apostles did it that way.

THE HOW

As to the HOW we do it, is very simple. The Lord's church exists in only two ways. One is the church universal; not mystical. There is no such thing as a "mystical church". It is the church universal, which idea includes all the saved. When the Lord said "I will build my church" Math. 16:18; when Paul says Christ is the "head of the body which is the church" Eph. 1:22-23, this is used in the universal sense of the church including all his people. They are all of the same.

faith and order as in the first century. This use of the church has no ecclesiastical earthly head or governing body. Now the other use of the church is in its local meaning, such as the church in Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus, etc. Here it includes all the saved in these cities. Now the church can function only in its local capacity. Over the local church we have elders. I Tim. 3 and Col. 1. There are no higher rulers in the church of the Lord than the elders. The Highland Church of Christ believes in "cooperation" without "corporation". We believe in and teach the absolute independence of each local congregation. We stand unalterably for the local autonomy of the church. As an example of what I mean by "cooperation" without "corporation"; some 30 years ago in Nashville, Tennessee, more than 40 congregations went together in a congregational "cooperation" to have the greatest gospel meeting in the history of the church in this country, yet no "corporation or society was organized". Brother N. B. Hardeman did the preaching. No church thought of losing its local autonomy. In Houston, Texas, some few years ago one of the greatest gospel meetings in all this section was conducted. Practically all the congregations went together, in congregational "cooperation", to make this possible. Yet there was no "society" formed; no "corporation of congregations" with "ecclesiastical authority over other churches." No one thought of losing his local autonomy. Rather, in these efforts, each congregation exercised its local right to give or not to give. All over this nation, for all the years back, and even now, churches of Christ have so cooperated and we have grown without any kind of super society having come into existence. This radio program is carried on in the very same way. The Highland Church has absolutely no power, no control over a single congregation on earth. We have this program and all who are interested in seeing that the lost of the world have an opportunity to hear this wonderful story of the cross, and be saved, help us if they so desire.

Our radio program is just a radio program. It has no power on earth, it has absolutely no organization of its own. The congregation at Highland has no authority over anything save our programs of work under our own local elders. The Highland Church of Christ has no supervision over any preachers other than Brethren Nichols, Willeford and myself who work under the elders here. I am the local preacher for the church.

Now it has astonished the religious world that without some kind of ecclesiastical conference or society to control our church activities nationally, we have accomplished such a marvelous work. We have done it by each congregation, exercising its own local autonomy in giving and no church has surrendered any of its rights or liberties. If our brethren could only know the good of this work, I believe they would determine that the world, not through societies or corporations, but by the church, should hear the gospel that they might be

saved. We can change the complexion of the religious world in one generation if permitted to continue with programs like this. Let us not be frightened into tragic decisions that will cause thousands to come to the judgment lost, asking, why didn't you send the gospel to us? It will be too late then. Just think! 15,000,000 will go into eternity lost this year; 1,000,000 this month; 280,000 this week; 40,000 this day, 1,000 this hour; 21 this minute. The principle of "congregational cooperation" has been one of the reasons for the church of Christ having grown in such rapid strides for the past 35 years. Let us continue to help each other. Let us continue "congregational cooperation" without congregational corporations or "societies"; We then shall remain independent local units just as God has decreed.

WHY

Our final thought for the lesson today. The "Final Destiny of the Church the Lord Built" is "why" we are so anxious for you to come into the church. In Eph. 5:26-27 Paul says that Christ "sanctified and cleansed" the church "by the washing of water by the word", that he "might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish". Our Lord is coming back again. This time it is the end of the world II Peter 3:9-10, he is coming for his bride—the church, Eph. 5:27. His bride must be "glorious—holy—and without blemish" as he presents her to his Father in Heaven. In John's most beautiful description of the church in her glorified state, as given in Rev. 21:9, he says "come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife". My good friends the church is the Lamb's bride—his wife. Thus we see that her "final destiny" is to be presented to Christ as his bride—his wife, that the church, together with our Savior, may live with God throughout all the ages yet to be, I Cor. 15:24-28. You can't afford to die out of this glorious church that is to be presented unto the Lord. Let men say what they please about being "saved out of this glorious church", but remember, if you are out of it, you will not be presented unto the Lord, for he is coming for the church—his bride—his wife. Won't you and yours today, become a part of this wonderful church the Lord said, "I will build" and about which the prophets spoke? You become a member of it by believing in the Christ, by repenting of your sins, and by being baptized for the remission of your sins by a burial and a resurrection, Acts 2:38 and Col. 2:12. May God bless you, may you and yours come into his church—the bride of Christ, that you may be presented unto him as a part of this church Glorious, when our Blessed Lord comes back again. Remember you must be, "coupled on"!

The Church is the only... world... We can change the... of the religious world... in our... with progress... the... of... in... of... in... of... in... of... in... of...

Highland Church of Christ

FIFTH AND HIGHLAND

ABILENE, TEXAS

gave out of the... church... if you are... of it... will not be... into the... for he is... ready for the... his wife... you and... you... of this... church the... you... which... report... of... in... of... of... and... for the... of... and... of... of... and... his... into... of... that you may be... and... of... when our... Lord... "coupled off"...