


1950

# Come.... Worship: "In A Kingdom that Cannot Be Shaken"

[College Church of Christ, Abilene, Texas]

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FORREST R. WALDROP

COME . . . .  
WORSHIP

*"In A Kingdom That  
Cannot Be Shaken"*



College Church of Christ

*Sewell Auditorium*

Abilene, Texas



# The Non-Denominational Way

A religious awakening of the most extraordinary significance is now developing throughout the world. It is no mere emotional orgy. It does not wear the usual garb of revivalism. Millions are still unaware of it, and other millions have only the most imperfect conception of what this awakening means. Nevertheless, it is a force of almost incredible magnitude. All the nations of the world are destined to feel its impact. It is the restoration of THE NON-DENOMINATIONAL WAY of serving Christ.

## OF WHAT CHURCH WAS PAUL A MEMBER?

The thoughtful student of the Word of God will realize that Christianity in the days of the Apostles of Christ was utterly different from the maze of conflicting denominations and religious parties of today. To what church did Paul belong? Anyone can see that he belonged to a divine institution, that CHURCH which antedates all the sects in Christendom. It was called "*the church of the first-born*" (Heb. 12: 23), "*the church of God*" (Acts 20: 28), or simply "*the church*" (Acts 2: 47). Collectively, the congregations were called "*churches of Christ*" (Romans 16: 16).

## HOW ONE CAN BELONG TO THAT CHURCH

The problem of how to belong to THE CHURCH mentioned in the above paragraph is one of genuine difficulty for these reasons:

1. Many people believe that THAT CHURCH no longer exists in the world. It has been succeeded, they say, by the prevailing denominational-

ism of our generation. Such persons overlook the sublime truth that this church is a "*kingdom that cannot be shaken*" (Heb. 12: 28), and that Jesus said, concerning this church, that "*the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*" (Matt. 16: 18).

2. Still others profess that the whole aggregation of contradictory religious groups constitutes the so-called "*invisible church.*" This view makes membership in any of the parties equivalent to membership in the ONE CHURCH of the Scriptures. This view cannot be correct (1) because of the incompatible teachings of the various sects themselves, (2) and because the entire idea of various sects within the true body is thoroughly refuted by Paul in his remarks to the Corinthians:

*"Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions (the Greek word here is "schisms") among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1: 10).*

Sectarianism is always condemned in Scripture. Peter speaks of sects as "*destructive heresies*" (II Peter 2: 1), and Paul plainly says that there is "*but one body*" (I Cor. 12: 20).

3. Another phase of the problem is seen in the universal proverb that "*there is good in all churches.*" It never occurs to the thoughtless to follow up this proverb with a question or two. What if there is good in all churches (which none will deny). Who is in a position to benefit from that good? Who belongs to all churches? The fact that there is good in all churches is precisely what is wrong with denominational-

ism. ALL THE TRUTH is not found in any of them; but GOD'S TRUTH has been cut up into bits; and denominations have built their party fences around favorite verses or chapters of the truth. It is not the truth in all churches that the devout soul abhors, but THE FENCES which have no right to be there and which have so mutilated the very gospel that it is almost unrecognizable.

### **GOING BACK TO THE ORIGINAL CHURCH**

To a world grown tired of the endless bickerings of the divided religious world, the very idea of climbing back beyond the heresies and divisions, far back beyond the popes, the reformers, and the creed-makers, is a challenge so thrilling with a prospect so wonderful that no power of evil will ever be able to remove it from human hearts. The only people who are not enraptured with this objective are those who have not really seen it. Once the true perspective is established and the true worshipper sees the confused and broken sects of our generation in their true relation to the primeval church, positively nothing can satisfy that soul except membership in that original church.

### **THE TRUE WAY IS SLANDERED**

Satan has brought the full power of his cunning craftiness against this ORIGINAL WAY. His attack upon That Way is directed with devilish subtlety not merely against the doctrines of That Church, but against ITS OBJECTIVE.

The hosts of wickedness would be glad to receive the churches of Christ as ANOTHER PARTY. Their open welcome into the ample bosom of denominational fellowship would be immediately achieved BUT FOR ONE THING. That

one thing is a vision of God's true church, revealed to mankind in the Bible, and entitled to the loyalty of all humanity.

### **THE REASON FOR OPPOSING IT**

A similar case existed in the days of the earliest disciples. Rome was a nation of many religions. Every emperor was a god; and shrines were as plentiful as streets. Rome at first welcomed Christianity as merely another religion. Rome had seen many new religions, and her attitude was certainly not unfriendly to any new sect. However, when it became apparent that the religion of Christ was SUPERIOR to all the religions Rome had previously known and when the vested interests of entrenched paganism recognized in this newcomer the prophecy of their own decline, they seized the torch and the sword. They turned upon the new faith with every savage instinct; and only the grace and mercy of God brought His fire-tested church through the Ten Persecutions initiated against her by Pagan Rome.

### **THE HEALING OF DIVISIONS**

Exactly that same pattern is seen in the opposition of the wicked against God's true church today. As long as any church is content to be merely a party among parties in a divided Christendom, all is well. But the very moment one sees the glory of the pristine church and begins to preach THAT to men and women, the aroused animosity of ALL PARTIES is the quick result. Why is this? Simply because Satan sees in this vision THE HEALING of those divisions with which he has corrupted the religious world of our age.

## **THE CHURCH OF CHRIST NOT A DENOMINATION**

It is a fact that the church of Christ is not a party. In no sense whatever is it a denomination. It has none of the characteristics of a denomination, and it exhibits none of the distinctive marks of a sect. This fact is well known to many religious leaders whose entrenched position in the seats of privilege has prevented their accepting it. If one can understand why Annas and Caiaphas did not accept Jesus, he has the obvious answer as to why entrenched party leaders today do not accept this faith which is non-sectarian.

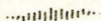
With the great multitudes, however, no such reluctance to accept the truth may be found. They will accept it, once they see it. This, however, is the reason that determined forces are marshalled to prevent their seeing it. Denominationalism cannot stand idly by while a return to the ancient, universal faith of Jesus Christ is preached. Too many religious thrones would be toppled. Too many fine emoluments of ecclesiastical power would be reduced. Too many divided families would find their joyful reunion in Christ.

### **EARMARKS OF A DENOMINATION**

The fact that churches of Christ are not denominational in character is easily proved and demonstrated. Denominations have characteristics which may be studied as objectively as the markings of a bird or a plant. Here are some characteristics common to all denominations. (1) The existence of an earthly headquarters such as Rome, Salt Lake City, or Boston. (2) The existence of an earthly legislative body such as a conference, a synod, or a college of cardinals. (3) A vocabulary of religious titles, offices, and functions foreign to the



Bible. (4) An unauthorized name which is the rallying point of denominational loyalty. (5) The acceptance of one or more innovations in the worship of Jesus Christ. (6) The reception of another book, in addition to the Bible, to which full allegiance is given, and which usually is peculiar to one denominational body. Other characteristics of denominations might be pointed out, but these six are almost universal. The possession of any one of these qualities is a sure indication of denominational status; but in nine cases out of ten, one will find ALL these earmarks.



## NO EARTHLY HEADQUARTERS

I. Churches of Christ are free. There is no earthly headquarters from which a ruling bishop or other clergyman can control the physical assets and the doctrinal teaching of the church. It is one of the amazing inconsistencies of human nature that people who appreciate political liberty well enough to die for it are sometimes totally indifferent to the most corrupt religious dictatorship.

All over the world one finds religious rulers, enthroned with all the pomp and ceremony of kings, fattened with the wealth of the world, ruling their subjects as arbitrarily as any Medieval despot, and setting forth some earthly city as the "*capitol*" of the Kingdom of Heaven. Rome, Salt Lake City, and Boston are three well-known examples of such an earthly control center for denominations.

The very existence of such a set of controls is sinful and contrary to the Bible. "*The Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother*" (Galatians 4:26).

Jesus Christ established forever the spiritual

nature of the government in His church when He said to the Twelve Apostles, "*Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Matt. 19: 28).

Concerning any earthly city as a religious capitol or headquarters, the words of Jesus Christ are most appropriate. He said, "*The Jerusalem that now is . . . is in bondage with her children*" (Galatians 4: 25).

Contrasting the physical capitol of the Mosaic Law with the spiritual headquarters of the true church, the writer of Hebrews said:

*"For ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched . . . and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; . . . but ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven and to God the Judge of All, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant"* (Hebrews 12: 18-19, 22-24).

## NO EARTHLY HEAD

II. Churches of Christ do not submit to the legislative authority of any earthly religious government. There is no individual in the churches of Christ to regiment the faithful. There are no councils, synods, conferences, or other assemblies vested with the controlling guidance of the church. No man can style himself the head of the churches of Christ.

It has been alleged that Jesus Christ is the heavenly head of the church and that the pope

or other earthly religious ruler is the temporal head of the church. A little light from the Bible will dispel the darkness on this point.

### **CHRIST IS THE ONLY HEAD**

A. Christ needs no earthly substitute. The Bible says that He now has all authority "*in heaven AND ON EARTH*" (Matthew 28: 18). This shows that Christ has not abdicated His place of authority on earth. The men who arrogate this authority to themselves are one with the angels who kept not their first estate.

B. Christ taught that NO earthly head could guide His followers. This fact He showed to be true even if the Blessed Christ Himself were that head! The whole theory of an earthly vicegerency of Jesus Christ breaks down in light of these plain words:

*"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you"* (John 16: 7).

This answers the entire question as to why Jesus Christ returned to the Father. It was "*expedient*" for the disciples. A spiritual, world-wide kingdom of the kind Christ came to establish would only be hindered by having any man as its head—even Jesus Christ—on the planet, bound by all the limitations of space, and circumscribed by all the inconveniences of our earth-bound life. What a commentary on man's audacity it must seem to the angels of God that man would set up a so-called vicegerent on earth to do something Jesus Christ Himself did not attempt and which He plainly said is inexpedient.

Churches of Christ know only the govern-

ment set forth in the Bible. Elders, or bishops, of the local churches are free under God and the Bible to carry out the complete will of God without subordination to the ecclesiastical controls that have strangled the world.

## NO DENOMINATIONAL VOCABULARY

III. Churches of Christ do not have a denominational vocabulary. To some this may seem a trifle. Nevertheless, here is one of the sure signs of the true church that it shall "*hold fast the form of sound words*" (II Timothy 1:13) and manifest that "*sound speech that cannot be condemned*" (Titus 2:8).

It will be recalled that when Jephthah took the fords of the Jordan, the test of all who came that way turned upon the pronounciation of a single word (Judges 12:6). It is true now as it was when Peter stood in the firelight that "*thy speech maketh thee known*" (Matthew 26:73).

### BIBLE NAMES FOR BIBLE THINGS

The churches of Christ receive the vocabulary of the Bible. It is their constant endeavor to call Bible things by Bible names. This is important. In no other way can the "*truth that makes men free*" be preserved from misunderstanding and adulteration.

1. "*The Lord's Supper*" is the correct name of this ordinance as may be seen by a glance at I Cor. 11:20.

2. "*Evangelist*" is a scriptural term for the minister of a congregation (II Tim. 4:5). "*Minister*" is equally good (II Cor. 4:5).

3. "*Pastor*" means shepherd and is a synonym for elder or bishop and may not be applied

to the minister of a church (Ephesians 4: 11).

4. "*Father*" is a title belonging only to God (when used in a religious sense) and may not be applied to any man (Matthew 23: 9).

5. "*Obeying the gospel*" is a term for accepting salvation that deserves wider use. It is Scriptural (I Peter 4: 17; II Thess. 1: 8).

6. "*Reverend*" is a term occurring only once in Scripture (Psalms 111: 9), where it is applied to the name of God. The spirit of Matthew 23: 9 forbids this title for men.

7. Such terms as "*rapture*," "*clergy*," "*laity*," "*host*," "*pope*," "*cardinal*," "*archbishop*," "*getting religion*," "*experience of grace*," etc., are unscriptural names for things unknown in the Scriptures.

## NO HUMAN NAME

IV. Churches of Christ wear the most glorious name in all the world. Here is a name (1) prophesied a thousand years before Christ (Isaiah 62: 2); (2) delivered to the disciples first at Antioch (Acts 11: 26) (3) by the mouth of Paul (Acts 9: 15) and (4) made binding upon the church throughout all generations by the Apostle Peter (I Peter 4: 16).

"*Churches of Christ*" (Romans 16: 16) were so designated in the days of the apostles of Christ. It is a great privilege to be so designated today. It should be carefully pointed out that this Scriptural name has in no sense been denominationalized by the Lord's people. No effort to treat this name as the personal property of any group has been made. This name is today being preached as the name every true church should wear. Nobody has tried to patent this name; and no sect has any priority with regard to it.

## WHY SOME WILL NOT WEAR IT

In view of the above, the logical question is "*Why, then, do most churches refuse to wear this name?*" The answer is simple. IT IS BECAUSE THEY PREFER SOME OTHER NAME.

This is also true with God's commanded designation for the disciples of Jesus. They were called "*Christians first at Antioch*" (Acts 11:26); and Peter made this name mandatory when he said, "*Glorify God in this name.*" (I Peter 4:16). This is a commandment both as clear and as imperative as "*Lie not one to another.*"

What does it mean to glorify God as a "*Christian*"? First, it means to WEAR that name to the exclusion of all others. This is the name the God of heaven and earth wants promoted. It is the only name that will prevail in heaven. Long before men shall enter heaven, their party labels will have to be stripped off. Let the significance of that truth reach the hearts of men, and a great victory over division will have been gained.

In the churches of Christ men, as individuals, wear only the name "*Christian*"; BUT WHAT A NAME! This name partakes of the nature of that name that "*is above every name.*" This name is the soul's sweetest haven. Here is joy of the saints and the glory of God!

## NONDENOMINATIONAL WORSHIP

V. Churches of Christ are non-denominational in their worship. Members of every church on earth admit that the worship of the churches of Christ is the true worship of God.

**This worship is the worship initiated by Christ and the apostles without additions or subtractions. No one can say a word against it,**

for it is God's way to worship. Men may suppose other ways just as good; but no one can ever be sure that man's presumption at this point will go unpunished. In the long ages, God never once overlooked willful presumption with reference to His worship. Those who expect God to take their way on an equality with His way are certainly expecting a miracle!

#### **GOD'S WAY TO WORSHIP**

The Way of the Lord with reference to worship is, of course, the revealed way. "See that thou make all things according to the pattern" (Heb. 8. 5) specifically applies to the worship of Christ. What is that way? It is simply this: (1) To pray earnestly in full assurance of faith. (2) To sing with the spirit and the understanding. (3) To give of money or means to the support of the work of Christ. (4) To observe the Lord's Supper, and (5) To preach or teach the word of God. All will agree that both precept and example for **this type** of worship are found in the New Testament. For convenience to the truth-seeker, here is an outline of some of the more familiar references:

God's Way to Worship

**Prayer**—Acts 2: 46; II Thes. 5: 17; I Cor. 15: 15.

**Lord's Supper**—Act 20: 7; Acts 2: 46; I Cor. 11: 28.

**Giving**—Act 20: 35; I Cor. 16: 2; II Cor. 8. 7-14.

**Teaching**—Acts 2: 46; Acts 20: 7; II Tim. 4: 2.

**Singing**—Col. 3: 16; Eph. 5: 19; I Cor. 14: 15.

#### **DOES IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE?**

Although the Lord's way is known to man, there is a hurtful impression abroad that "*it really makes no difference how we worship, just so we are sincere in it.*"

Sincerity is, of course, necessary. However, sincerity alone is not sufficient. Worship must be "*in truth*" as well as "*in spirit*."

It is utterly impossible for the creature, man, to approach his Creator, God, except in the specific way that God has revealed. This was true in the days of Cain and Abel. It was true during the personal ministry of Christ. It is true today.

God has thrown around the revealed way of worship the powerful protection afforded by such prohibitives as these:

(a) "*God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth*" (John 4: 24).

(b) "*Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*" (Mark 7: 7).

(c) "*God . . . dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything*" (Acts 17: 24-25).

(d) "*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book*" (Revelations 22: 18).

(e) "*Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God*" (II John 9).

(f) "*Thus ye have made the commandments of God of none effect by your tradition*" (Matthew 15: 6).

(g) "*Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written*" (I Cor. 4: 6).

In the light of these foregoing passages, the



only conclusion to be drawn by the believer is this: *It does make some difference HOW we worship.*

## NO CREED BUT GOD'S WORD

VI. Churches of Christ are non-denominational in that they have no other guide but the Bible. No creed but the Word of God is allowed. This fact alone forever sets the church of Christ above denominational status. It is the unfailing mark of a sect that some other authority is elevated to parity with the Bible or even exalted above it.

One church makes the writings of its popes equal in authority to the Holy Scriptures. Another elevates the Book of Mormon or Science and Health to a place of credibility equal to that of the Bible. Still others have their manual, or their discipline, or their Articles of Faith, or their Confession.

### THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY AUTHORITY

The Bible itself admits of no subsequent revelations. Its pretensions are such that the admittance of other "*true revelations*" of later date is impossible without first denying the truth of the Bible. A study of the following Scriptures will show that the Bible is either "*the only*" revelation from God, or that it is no revelation whatever.

(1) "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1: 3 (A. V.))

(2) "That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3: 17) (A. V.)

(3) "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel to you than that that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1: 8-9) A. V.)

(4) "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelations 22: 18-19) A. V.)

(5) "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14: 26) A. V.)

(6) "Howbeit, when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16: 13) (A. V.)

(7) "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

A moment's reflection will reveal that every truth contained in any creed is also contained in the Bible, because the apostles were guided into "*all truth.*"

On the other hand, if any creed should fail to contain all that is contained in Scripture it must be charged with "*taking away*" from the Word of God, thus incurring the penalties of Revelations 22: 18-19.

Churches of Christ positively do not possess any other creed but the Bible. Here is the non-

denominational church which takes as its rule of faith and practice the Bible, the WHOLE Bible and NOTHING but the Bible. If men deny that this is anything unusual, let them produce another church that even pretends to do this!

### THE NON-DENOMINATIONAL WAY

Churches of Christ are non-denominational because:

1. Their headquarters is in heaven, not on earth.

2. Their only head in heaven and on earth is Jesus Christ our Lord.

3. Their vocabulary is not the language of Ashdod, but that "*sound speech that cannot be condemned.*"

4. Their name is the God-given name. The disciples are called "*Christians*" now as well as at Antioch.

5. Their worship is the worship God himself has revealed, unmixed with innovations.

6. Their creed is the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible.

Here is the non-denominational way to worship God. Here is the way wherein the righteous may walk as Christians and Christians only, unbranded with human labels, unfettered with human creeds, unregimented by ecclesiastics, unspoiled with this world's vain deceit. Here is a refuge for the believer. Here is a citadel of impregnable strength that shall outlast this world's passing parade of churches of which it is said in Scripture, "*Every plant which my Heavenly Father planted not shall be rooted up*" (Matthew 15: 13).

