

Examining The Lord's Church

THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

Greetings and welcome to this edition of the Berean Break. My name is George A. Sinkie and I am glad that you have joined us for this study. We are in a series of lessons on Examining The Lord's Church. I hope that you have been able to be with us for the previous lessons and I hope that you can also join us for future lessons. As we begin let's go to God in prayer,

Great God in heaven, we thank You for this day and each day in our lives. May we use each day to draw closer and closer to You. We thank You for Your word which gives us all the guidance we need to be right with You. Be with us now as we study together. In Jesus' name, Amen!!

Did you notice what I just said? Were you paying attention during that prayer? That prayer was offered in "Jesus' name." Is this important? Wouldn't it be just as good to pray in the name of "Bill" or "John" or "Mary?" Even someone with a basic understanding of God's word would recognize the error of praying in those names. One reason I am a member of the Lord's church - the church OF Christ, is its name. It is not uncommon to hear the phrase, "There is nothing in a name." One poet even wrote, "A rose by any other name would smell so sweet." But friends, names are important! Names give identity. You can be sure that those persons who say there is nothing in a name are concerned about their names. You can be sure those persons would not want their names to be forged. If they really would not care, perhaps they could loan me their checkbook. Those persons who say there is nothing in a name are concerned about what they name their children. Imagine, if you will, calling their son or daughter - Fido. Would they not

care??

Friends, names are not only important to men, but they are also important to God. God has always attached great importance to names. When God created the first man, God gave him a name. Check this out in Genesis 5:2

He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.

That word translated as "Man" here in the NASB is literally "Adam." God allowed Adam to name all the animals, we read in Genesis 2:20

And the man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam, there was not found a helper suitable for him.

God changed Abram's name (meaning exalted father) to Abraham (meaning father of a multitude), as we see in Genesis 17:5

No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations.

Before the birth of John, Zacharias was told by the angel of God to name him John. Luke 1:13

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.

After John's birth, it was a surprise to many that they would name him John as we read in Luke 1:57-63

Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her. And it came about that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father. And his mother answered and said, "No indeed; but he shall be called John." And they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name." And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. And he asked for a tablet, and wrote as follows, "His name is John." And they were all astonished.

Before Jesus was born, the angel told Joseph what Mary's son would be named in Matthew 1:21

"And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

The name "Jesus" means "savior." Also notice Matthew 1:22-23, where another name for Jesus is given,

Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us."

There is great significance in the Lord's use of these names

- they were used with concern for what they meant.

The New Testament gives various names to the church. Several terms describe the nature of the church. Jesus describes it as "His church" and the "kingdom" in Matthew 16:18-19

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

To the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:22-23 that the church was Christ's "body,"

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.

In this same letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul referred to the church as the temple of God in Ephesians 2:20-22

having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

The church is also described as the "house of God," "a royal priesthood," "a holy nation," and other things. Most often, however, it is simply called the church. Consider Jesus' words to Peter, as we looked at before in Matthew 16:18

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.

The word "church" means, "called out." Those persons who are members of Christ's church are called out of sin and darkness and into faith in, and fellowship with, God. Simply using the word "church" was sufficient in Bible times because there were no denominations in existence as there are today. Friends, it's still possible today for a person to be a member of Christ's church without being a member of any denomination. Not only is it possible but that is the Lord's will.

The Bible includes several terms for the church that imply ownership. The church is frequently referred to as the "church of God." Listen to Paul's words to the elders of the church at Ephesus, as one example. This is found in Acts 20:28

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

In Galatians 1:13, Paul uses another example,

For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it;

Now we need to understand that this "church of God" is not the same thing as the "Church of God" denominations. According to one writer, there are at least 200 different man-made religions that use some form of the name "Church of God." These all began sometime after the 1880s by various men. The "church of God" in the Bible is a description of the

church, not a proper name for the church.

The Scriptures also refer to Christ's church as the "churches of Christ." In Romans 16:16, Paul wrote,

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

Jesus said, "I will build my church" as we read in Matthew 16:18. If it is Christ's church (and it is), then it is the church OF Christ. The phrase, "churches of Christ" refers to the various congregations of Christ's church. It refers to those congregations of the church that meet in different localities, or geographical areas. It cannot refer to various denominations, because remember, there were no denominations in existence when Paul used the phrase, "churches of Christ."

Let's make some application of what we have learned from the word of God today. In contrast to the church built by Christ, man-made churches often go by names that give glory and honor to man. Consider the Lutheran church, whose name gives honor to Martin Luther. Some churches built by man, such as the Church of Rome or Church of England, give honor to a particular locality with their name. Some of the churches built by men, such as the Baptist, the Seventh Day Adventist, and others give honor to a particular doctrine held by their group. In contrast to the names of the many man-made churches, the names of Christ's church all give honor and glory to the Godhead.

Friends, names are important, especially when they are given by God. Salvation can be found only in the name of Christ. Notice the following from Acts 4:8-12.

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them,

“Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. “He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very corner stone. “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”

Friends, for a church to be the church we read about in the Bible, it must use a name that is found in the Bible. But we have also seen, that a group may use a Bible name and still follow men. Christ’s church will have a scriptural name and scriptural doctrine. Check it out and know the truth.

This Berean Break is brought to you, here in East River South Dakota, by the pre-denominational church of Christ that meets at 1600 East First Avenue in Mitchell SD. You are welcome to meet with us at 10:00 Sunday Mornings for our assembly followed by a time of Bible Study, also on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 for an additional time to study God's Word. If you have a comment or a sincere Bible question, please call or text me at 605-770-5555. The Berean Break is brought to you in West River South Dakota by the pre-denominational Prairie City church of Christ. They also meet at 10:00 on Sunday morning. You can contact them at 605-593-7045. This is George A. Sinkie with the Lord's church, good-bye, for now, and remember to check out what I have taught with God's Word.

All Bible quotes, unless otherwise noted, are from the: New American Standard Bible. 1986 (electronic edition.) La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.