

STRANGE THINGS ABOUT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Text: Acts 17:18-20

INTRO: From the beginning there have been things connected with Christ's church that have greatly surprised folks. On Pentecost when the church came into existence, the city of Jerusalem was amazed by the events that transpired, Acts 2:12. Eleven years later, when the first Gentile converts were showed by God to be acceptable recipients of the gospel, even those who were already in the church were amazed by the turn of events, Acts 10:45.

In this lesson we will take note of some things that seem strange to many people of our generation--things about Christ's church that surprise people even after almost 2,000 years of its existence.

It might be noted that most of the things about Christ's church today that seem strange to most religious people are because virtually all other religious groups have never viewed the Bible as a pattern to be adhered to, or else have abandoned that view. There are several passages we believe indicate that the N.T. is to be our pattern in the organization, work, and worship of the N.T. church.

However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me 1st Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. (1 Tim 1:16).

Brethren, join in following my example, & note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. (Phil 3:17).

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

I. MANY ARE AMAZED TO LEARN THAT CHURCHES OF CHRIST DO NOT USE MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC IN THEIR WORSHIP SERVICES.

A. The O.T. allowed--even commanded such.
READ 2 CHRON 29:25-27. Levites

B. The priesthood has changed & we do not worship according to O.T. instructions (animal sac., incense, human priesthood, etc.) Heb 7:12

- C. The N.T. which prescribes our worship does not authorize mechanical music in worship. Christ never taught it. The H.S. didn't reveal it. The apostles never preached it. The church for centuries didn't practice it. The N.T. authorizes singing but it is silent as the tomb re playing.
 - 1. Moses' law allowed instrumental music, but Moses doesn't make laws for the church of Christ.
 - 2. David used mechanical music, but David was not even allowed to build the temple. He makes no law for the church of Christ.

II. OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER EACH SUNDAY.

- A. Both history & Scripture picture the L.S. as the focal point of the worship in the early church.
1 Cor 10:16; 11:20-34; Acts 2:42; 20:7
- B. Some of the reformers, Calvin in particular, tried to reinstate weekly communion. The Episcopal prayer book recognizes its importance. Macartney, former moderator of the Presby Ch in the USA wrote, "19 centuries have passed... & yet never a week has passed in all those years that His followers have not remembered Him in the L.S."
- C. The N.T. pattern. MT 26:29; MK 14:25; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor 11:20ff; 16:1-2.

III. MANY ARE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DOES NOT STRESS TITHING.

- A. Many preachers in modern churches go to the O.T. law & stress tithing. Like mechanical music, tithing was an integral part of the Levitical system.
- B. In the light of modern religious practices, many also find it surprising that churches of Christ do not get into the business world to make money with car washes, pie suppers, gambling ventures, sales of products or ser-

vices of any kind. Neither do we go door to door selling books or soliciting donations from the general public.

- C. The N.T. pattern calls for members of the congregation to give freely & generously from the blessings God has given them, 1 Cor 16:1-3; 2 Cor 9:7.

IV. MANY ARE CURIOUS TO HEAR MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST REFER TO THEIR PREACHER ON A FIRST NAME BASIS INSTEAD OF AN EXALTED TITLE.

- A. In the N.T. the terms elder, pastor & bishop are used interchangeably. Their qualifications are listed in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Most preachers are not pastors.

B. Further, Christ negated the concept of exalting one Christian above another. Any title of distinction that tends to exalt one faithful Christian above other faithful Christians violates the principle of MATT 23:5-11.

V. MANY FIND IT INCREDIBLE THAT CHURCHES OF CHRIST HAVE NO EARTHLY HEADQUARTERS, NO DENOMINATIONAL ORGANIZATION, NO CONVENTIONS, NO RULE-MAKING BODIES TO GUIDE THE CONGREGATIONS IN THEIR DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE.

- A. In this area, some congregations are behaving in such a way as to blur this distinction by brotherhood projects under the oversight of directors, a national committee, or the elders of a sponsoring church.

B. In the N.T. each congregation was independent, functioning under its own overseers. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet 5:1-4

La Porte, TX, date unknown
Exton, PA, February 8, 1987
Shiloh, Mexia, TX, February 16, 1992

Wallisville Rd, Highlands, TX, February 11, 1993
Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, October 25, 1998