

online book:

Christians Gathered in the Name of the Lord Jesus

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Christians Gathered in the Name of the Lord Jesus

Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, has given believers a wonderful promise in Matthew 18 verse 20, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The meaning of this promise is that He is actually the divine centre when Christians gather together.

Is He then recognised in all circumstances as Lord, even in minor matters? This, unfortunately, is not often the case. But yet there are Christians who met only in the name of the Lord Jesus. They celebrate the Lord's supper every Sunday. They frequently pray together and continue in the Apostle's doctrine in the same spirit as the believers did in the beginning of the Christian church.

What sort of people are these Christians?

They are people who own that they are sinners in the sight of a holy God. They have believed that Jesus Christ has borne their sins in His body on the cross (1 Peter 2 verse 24). They have confessed their guilt to God and know through faith that they have been forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness (1 John 1 verse 9). By receiving Jesus Christ they have received the right to be called the children of God because they have

been born of God through the action of the Holy Spirit (John 1 verse 12 ad 13). By the means of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, they are sanctified once and for all (Hebrews 10 verse 10).

Are they better than other Christians?

In themselves - NO - they are no better. They can only boast in the grace of God which has freed and preserved them, and on which they can rely when, unfortunately, they fail.

They know that "the flesh," the old unimovable wicked humans nature, is still with them and that they can dishonour their Lord is they are not careful. But thanks to God, Christians also have a new nature from which better things are to be expected (Ephesians 2 verse 10). They esteem all genuine children of god and love them. They know that they are united with them as members of "the body of Christ." Practical expression of this is sadly hindered by unscriptural doctrines or practices.

Why don't these Christians want a special name?

Because the Bible clearly condemns having separate names and groups, "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos but ministers through whom ye believed"

(1 Corinthians 3 verse 4 and 5).

"And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11 verse 26).

For these reasons they wan to bear only the name "Christian," and not be named after people, places or doctrines.

Divisions of any kind are clearly contrary to the teaching and spirit of the New Testament.

What doctrine do these Christians have?

Their doctrine is the Word of God (they have no creed but the Bible). They hold that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God.

This Word is their only guide in all questions of teaching and daily living.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3 verse 16).

They believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, begotten of the Holy spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered, died and rose from the dead and now sits at God's right hand.

What is the aim of these Christians?

They aim to go the way that the Bible marks out.

This has led some to leave existing denominations because in doctrine and practice these denominations do not entirely recognise the authority of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. On the basis of what the Bible teaches they see that all believers are priests, and may exercise this service. All who are born anew - all true Christians - are living stones of a spiritual house and constitute a holy priesthood who offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Why leave the denominations?

God hates the mixture of light and darkness and of believer and unbeliever, as the Apostle Paul wrote, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Corinthians 6 verse 14 and 15.)

If believers are in union with people who are living in open sin, or who teach and hold wrong things about the Person and reconciliatory work of Jesus Christ, they cannot honour God as He desires. Therefore, God says, "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Timothy 2 verse 19.)

Don't these Christians form a new sect?

The Bible defines a sect (or a party) as those who follow a particular man-made doctrine or a person (Acts 5 verse 17, Titus 3 verses 9-11, and 1 Corinthians 3 verses 3, 4, and 21).

We do not form a new denomination, if we turn back to what was taught and practised by the Apostles in the beginning of the church era, without recourse to human instructions, but solely to the Bible. Christendom is already split and divided far too much and they do not want to worsen this. They want to preserve the unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond of

peace (Ephesians 4 verse 3). If we want to practise this unity we must do what the Bible says, and that means separation from all man-made religious establishments and organisations.

What basis for meeting does God recognise?

Of the first Christians we read that, "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts 2 verse 42). We further read concerning the unity of the church, "There is ONE body and ONE Spirit, ONE faith, ONE baptism, ONE God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4 verse 4).

"God has tempered the body together. . . .that there should be no schism in the body" (1 Corinthians 12 verses 24 and 25).

"Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you." (1 Corinthians 1 verse 10).

". . . . that they all may be one. . . ." (John 17 verse 21).

Since when has the church existed?

The Lord Jesus said to Peter, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16 verse 18). These words indicate that the church was not yet in existence. The foundation of the Church or assembly as the house of God was laid by the Apostles and prophets of the New Testament (Ephesians 2 verses 19 and 20). To the assembly at Corinth Paul wrote, "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3 verse 11). The "birthday" of the Church is identified with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as described in Acts 2. He lives in the assembly, the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3 verse 16).

What happens in these meetings?

Christians, who in faith trust the promise of the Lord Jesus that He will be in the midst when they are gathered to His name (Matthew 18 verse 20), do not leave the leading of their meetings to some humanly appointed leader. If Hebrews 2 verse 12 is true no other leader is necessary. There is no indication in the New Testament that any individual was appointed by God or man to lead in the worship of God, nor any indication that only one man should exercise all the gifts of the Spirit. Those who were full time in the Lord's service (i.e. had no secular employment) appear to have been evangelists and church-planters and do not appear to have exercised special functions or held special offices to

the exclusion of others. The idea of clergy and laity is foreign to the New Testament. To the Assembly, Paul wrote, "when ye come together, everyone of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done to edifying" (1 Corinthians 14 verse 26).

Don't they have chaos?

When believers subject themselves to God-given instructions and place themselves under the direction of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8 verse 5), He gives an undertaking that everything will run in an orderly fashion, "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14 verse 33).

With the ministry of the Word on this basis the God-given gifts of those men who are prophets, shepherds or teachers will bring about the maturing of the saints and the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4 verse 11 and 12, and 1 Corinthians 14 verse 29).

These believers accept the instruction that women keep silent in these meetings (1 Corinthians 14 verse 34).

Who qualifies for membership?

These Christians form no human organisation of which you may become a member because the Bible does not mention this. As far as the Word of God is concerned, the Assembly is the body of Christ, to which all real children of God belong.

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12 verse 4 and 5).

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12 verses 12 and 13).

What is your response?

If you are prepared to take this path of obedience, the way God gives in His infallible Word be like the people of Berea—"They received the word in all readiness of mind and

sought the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17 verse 11).

Pray as you think about the following important question:-

How and where should believers meet together?

God will clearly make His will known to you. There are two simple conditions:-

Be honest before God and bow obediently to God's Word.

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