

THE IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH

Radio Sermon # 16

November 10, 1962

On one occasion, as recorded in Matthew 16:18, Jesus declared to Peter, "~~Expx~~ "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Peter had just declared Him to be the Christ, the son of the Living God. The term "church" as is used here is singular in number. Jesus build only one church. Paul emphasized to the Ephesians that "there is one body." (Ephesians 4:4) To the Colossians he wrote "He (that is Christ) is head of the body, the church." (Colossians 1:18).

There is one body and the body is the church. In the light of the scriptures just read this cannot be denied. There must be, therefore, only one church. To the Corinthians Paul wrote, "But now they are many members, but one body." (1 Cor 12:20) A person may begin the reading of the New Testament with the first verse of the first chapter of Matthew and read through the last verse of the last chapter of Revelation, and he will read of only one New Testament church. That church is the Lord's church, and it is undenominational in all of its aspects.

Membership in the Lord's church is predicated upon a person's obedience to the gospel. The Lord adds to the church those who obey the gospel. No man, or body of men, including the church on the congregational level has any prerogative to admit or deny any person membership in the church of the Lord. According to Acts chapter 2 and verse 41 we are told the Lord added to the church daily or day by day those that should be saved, or those that were being saved. Then Paul tells us again in I Corinthians 12:18 that "now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him." Therefore no man has the right to say who will and who will not be eligible for membership in that body.

The New Testament stipulates that all disciples of Christ are to be united together in one body, the church. Jesus prayed that all who believe on him might be one as he and the Father are one. (John 17:20-21) Paul besought the Corinthians to speak the same things and to have no divisions among them (1 Cor 1:10); and he wrote the Ephesians beseeching them to give "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph 4:1-6).

Whilst the New Testament makes such stringent demands for unity among believers, so-called Christendom is divided into many sects or denominations. Denominational

house of the Lord at that time. All of this is going to happen in Zion and the word of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem. Now I want us to notice a prophecy or two from the New Testament in this connection. In Mark 9:1 Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power." Now what is the kingdom of God. When Christ said "Upon this rock I will build my church" in Matthew 16:18 he also said unto Peter in the following verse, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom." Thus Christ spoke of the church and the kingdom in one breath making these terms synonymous, or speaking of the same thing with different terms. Now we have already seen, according to I Timothy 3:14,15 that the house of God is the church of God, and since his house is his church then must also the kingdom be the church. From this passage we learn that the kingdom is going to come with power. Notice again with me in John 14:26 where the Lord said, "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things I said unto you." Now here is the power that he is speaking of in Mark 9:1.

Just prior to the ascension of our Lord as recorded in Luke 24:46 47 said, "Thus it is written, that Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations beginning from Jerusalem." Now notice again we have the words of our Lord stating that certain things should be preached unto all nations beginning from Jerusalem. And In Mark 9 we learned that the kingdom was not a long way off because of the fact that some of them listening to him at that time would still be alive and see the kingdom come with power. We also learn from this that the church as yet has not been established, contrary to the doctrine of some that it was established in the days of John the Baptist for John was now dead at this time.

Now let us summarize briefly, in order that we might not get confused, just what we have learned so far about the coming of the church, or the house of God of the kingdom of God. First, it will be in the "latter days." We do not as yet, so far as this study is concerned know what that expression means. Then we learned that the Government of the Lord will be established in Zion. 3rd. Many people will be involved, and in fact many nations are going to flow into it. The word of the Lord will be preached from Jerusalem. The kingdom is going to come with power. It is going to be established shortly after the words spoken in Mark 9:1 and repentance and remission of sins shall be preached at that time. until tomorrow