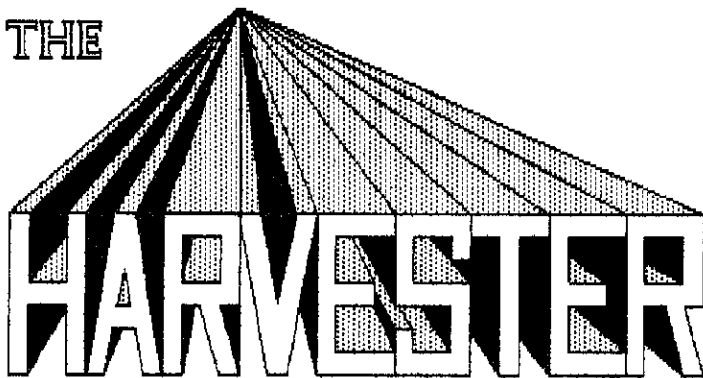


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"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

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No. 150

FROM HEAVEN OR OF MEN?

One of the most baffling replies Jesus ever gave occurred in the Temple at Jerusalem. *"And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me."* (Mark 11:29,30) Knowing that taking either position would condemn them, the chief priests and scribes and elders would not reply to this question from Jesus. However, the correct answer was obvious to everyone else. John was a prophet of God and a

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messenger of whom the Old Testament had predicted would come.

Today, as we look at the many "churches" in our nation, we must continue to ask ourselves: is it *"from heaven, or of men?"* For those who are willing to *"search the scriptures"*, the correct answers will be obvious. But the question remains: are we willing to accept the truth? Or will we be like the chief priests and bury our heads in the sand for fear of what the multitudes will think? It is high time that we seriously examine the "church" we attend.

We might first ask, "Who purposed (or designed) the church? Was it a mortal man or did it come from heaven?" How does that answer compare with the record of Ephesians 3:10-11? *"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."* This shows that the blueprint of the true church was drawn up in heaven and not in the mind of some great religious leader born on this side of the cross. Can we say "our" church was purposed by Christ?

What kind of a foundation does "your" church have? Of heaven or of men? Certainly the house of God is not built on any earthly man (1 Cor. 1:12,13), not even on Peter or Paul! The Lord's church is built on Jesus Christ as its only true foundation. *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* (1 Cor. 3:11)

Here is another question worth pondering. Did a man purchase the church you attend or was it heaven-bought? Acts 20:28 will tell us what our answer should be. *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* If we are searching for the one true church, it will be the one that Christ gave His own life for (Eph. 5:25).

Similarly, it is impossible for man to take the credit of giving the Lord's church its doctrine. Yet many religious bodies are known for their affiliations with the doctrine of specific men. Only the teachings of Christ are to be taught in the true church and it is so stated in Gal. 1:9-12. The apostle Paul writes: *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed ... But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."* John likewise stresses the importance of finding the "authentic" church today. *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."* (2 John 9-11)

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How do people become members of "your" church? Do they join, get voted in, or are they "added" by the Lord? Which way is "from heaven" and which is "of men"? The Bible plainly says: "*And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" (Acts 2:47) "*But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*" (1 Cor. 12:18) Unfortunately, many today prefer the politics of "voting" someone into "their church" instead of trusting the Lord to take care of His own business.

Finally we must question the source of the name we wear as members in the church. Is it a name "*from heaven, or of men?*" For the genuine church of Jesus Christ, the name is simply 'Christian', nothing more and nothing less. "*And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*" (Acts 11:26) Peter adds: "*Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*" (1 Pet. 4:16) Any name that members of "your" church call themselves by, other than 'Christian', means it is "of men" and unfit for God's children.

The Word of God supplies us with all the facts we need to determine whether "this church or that" is man-made or heaven-sent. The scriptural church was designed by Christ, built on Him, bought by Him, given its doctrine by Him, adds its members by Him and calls those members "Christians" only. Are we a part of this New Testament church? If not, do we realize that *"every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up"* (Matt. 15:13)? That includes every religious organization today except one: the one *"from heaven"*!

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. According to Lamentations when is it good for a man to bear the yoke?
2. On what day did the two disciples meet Jesus on the road to Emmaus?
3. In 2 Timothy, what did Demas do?
4. Why was the tower named Babel?
5. When Jacob awakened from his dream, what did he do with the stone that he used for a pillow?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. On the day Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground, who did the Lord

exalt? JOSHUA (Josh. 4:14)

2. How many days away was Passover when Jesus told His disciples He would be crucified in Matthew 26? TWO DAYS (Matt. 26:2)

3. What will happen to the one who humbles himself? HE WILL BE EXALTED (Luke 18:14)

4. According to Psalm 8, what is the son of man crowned with? GLORY AND HONOR (Psa. 8:5)

5. What did Jacob say he would take for his wages from Laban? RACHEL, HIS DAUGHTER (Gen. 29:18)

HERBS FOR DINNER

I very much enjoy sitting down and reading from the wisdom of Solomon in the Proverbs. The passage which I like perhaps more than any other is, "*Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.*" (Prov. 15:17) This passage paints two very vivid pictures in my mind.

The first is of a young couple who have just been married. Times are tough and they have very little to live on. They are only able to scrape together a few vegetables to eat; they can afford no meat. But the love these two have for each other is so powerful that they don't even notice their hunger. They eat their vegetables and are more content and happy

than a man who just finished a seven-course meal.

The other picture is of a middle-aged couple who have no children, but are quite well off financially. Both are bitter and sarcastic. They are constantly criticizing and nagging each other; they are the epitome of misery. They wake up in a foul mood arguing with one another, they argue constantly all day, and then they go to bed still squabbling. They eat well at every meal and they wear fine clothes. They live in a very elegant house with expensive furnishings. But none of these things seem to matter. Their surroundings can bring them no pleasure because they bring each other such misery.

As the world looks at the two couples they have only admiration and envy toward the older couple. They seem to have the kind of life which everyone covets so dearly -- wealthy and successful. The younger couple, the poor wretched creatures, they should have never gotten married, their neighbors say. They have nothing and are certainly to be pitied for their most miserable condition.

But the world's error is in believing that possessions bring happiness. This is a grievous error which men continue to commit daily. True happiness lies not in the abundance of things which we possess, but in the abundance of love in our lives. As for me, I would much rather share a dinner of herbs with someone I love.

TONY WHIDDON

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
June 1 - 5	Winchester, OH	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 5 - 7	Antioch Church Douglasville, GA	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
June 8 - 12	Willow Oaks Church Russell Springs, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 12 - 14 (F - Su)	New Bethel Church Cullman, AL 7:00pm Fri & Sat	Doug Farmer (Pisgah, AL)
June 14 - 19	Mt. Carmel Church Woodland, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
June McDonald 21 - 26	Ephesus, GA	James (Woodbury, TN)
June 26 - 28	Marrowbone, KY	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
June 28- -July 3 KY)	Hokes Bluff Church Gadsden, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City,
June 29- -July 3	New Bethel Church McKinney, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

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[Editor's Note: Continued thanks go to the congregations at Sun Hill Road (Birmingham, AL) and Hokes Bluff church (Gadsden, AL) for their support of this effort to spread the gospel. May God richly bless each of you.]