

# The Church of the Bible – No. 5

Dub McClish

The church of the Bible was/is not just whatever men want it to be. Jesus did not build His church on the basis of a community survey of what His contemporaries desired. He built it as it pleased Him. No man or council of men – not even an angel from Heaven – has the right to tamper with it (Gal. 1:6-9). It can be identified in any time or place by its Scriptural characteristics.

God has given men patterns for their conduct from the beginning. He gave Noah a pattern for the ark (Gen. 6:14-16). He gave Moses a very detailed pattern for the tabernacle (Exo. 25-27) and strictly warned him to make every detail “after their pattern” (25:40).

Hebrews 8:5 quotes the foregoing passage and applies it to the church:

But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises (v. 6, see vv. 7-13).

The writer argues from the lesser to the greater: If God was so concerned about His pattern for the lesser institution, how **much more** concerned is He about it for the greater. Yet for centuries foolish and presumptuous men have ignored the Divine injunction, building their religious orders by their own patterns, while ignoring the Biblical pattern.

The church of the Bible has a pattern for its acts of worship. Each first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2) it engaged in:

- (1) Singing spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16),
- (2) Praying (John 16:23-24; Acts 2:42; Col. 3:17),
- (3) Eating the Lord’s supper (Luke 22:19-20; Acts 20:7),
- (4) Giving money for the church’s work (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and
- (5) Studying God’s Word (Acts 2:42; 20:7, 32).

The church of the Bible has no centralized hierarchy but consists of independent self-governing congregations. Each congregation is ruled by a plurality of elders/bishops/pastors, assisted by deacons, all selected upon meeting Scriptural qualifications (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Heb. 13:17).

The Bible applies various designations to the church. It is called “the church of God” (1 Cor. 1:2) and “the church of the first born [ones]” (Heb. 12:23). Various congregations are called

“churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16). The most common designation is just “the church.” No other identity was needed, for denominationalism was unknown in concept or in fact.

By such marks of the pattern, plus details of the time, place, and circumstances of its origin, one can identify what is and what is not the church of the Bible.

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