

APOSTOLIC
ORGANIZATION



... By ...

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Jesus Christ, the author and the finisher of our faith, about 1900 years ago, brought into existence a body of believers known as the Church of God, and unto Peter the apostle, said, "Upon this rock, (and "who is a rock, save our God." - Sam. 22:32) will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—Mat. 16:18.

As we glance back through the centuries by the aid of the Holy Scriptures, we may view the Master at the great task of building a house for God, the Church of the living God; a building which has withstood the ravages of time, the persecution of the pagan Roman emperors, and the terrible devastations of the so-called Holy Roman Empire; yet a building, a church, a body of believers, against which even the gates of hell has not prevailed, and never shall prevail.

The question may be asked, as one looks over the religious world, and views the hundreds of wrangling, sects, professors of the lowly Nazarene, "Which is the body of believers through which God works?"

There can be but one answer to such a question as this. The church which Jesus founded will be the same kind of church as when He left it, at the time He appears again the second time with salvation: It will be still carrying the same divinely given name, patterned after the perfect model, in practice, in teaching, in zeal, in power, in purity, in charity, and in organization. Nothing less can be the Church of God.

As we study the primitive organization of the Church, we learn that the frame-work of the apostolic model was upon the offices of the twelve, the seventy, and the seven. If we retrace prayerfully the steps taken by Jesus as he organized the primitive body, a wonderful light will shine upon our pathway; for light ever shines upon the pathway of those who take the Master at His word, in which He promised that "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."—John 8:12.

Before Jesus dared to launch out in the organization of the Church of God, "He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom He named apostles."—Luke 6:12, 13.

These twelve were sent forth by Jesus with a divine commission still binding upon his consecrated followers today: "Preach the kingdom of God, and heal the sick." (Lu. 9: 1, 2.) From the record given in Acts of the Apostles, we learn that these twelve understood their duty to be giving themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."—Acts 6:4.

In the second step of the organization program, "The Lord appointed other seventy also," and sent them forth to preach the gospel and heal the sick, dispatching them also by two and two, as he had done with the twelve.—Luke 10:1.

The third step in the divine model organization was the selection of the seven, chosen by the brethren, under the divine guidance of the

Holy Spirit, and were given the appointment over the Spirit who were given the appointment over the business of the Church.—Acts 6:1-6.

Thus, upon these three orders of office, was builded the apostolic Church of God, by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Can we dare to profess to follow the Master Builder, and not accept the divinely given model and pattern after it? Can we remain a follower and not conform to the light now shining so clearly upon his designed organization? Can we reject the practice, the teaching, and the zeal of the apostolic church? As long as he was in the world he was the light of the world. Let his followers follow his light, in precept, and in example, as obedient children!

That the apostolic office was to continue, we cannot question, when we notice the promptness in which the eleven again completed the original number twelve by the selection of Matthias to take the place of Judas.—Acts 1:23,26.

That the Holy Spirit acknowledged the selection of Matthias, and numbered him as an apostle, we readily see by reading in Acts, 6:2, where the apostles are again numbered as twelve.—Acts 6:2.

Later in the ministry of the apostles, "Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." (Acts 12:1,2) This death again brought the apostolic number down to eleven, and no doubt under the continued persecutions of the enemies of the Church other apostles were slain for the sake

of Christ; for we read that the disciples Barnabas and Paul were called apostles; hence, would have been called to the apostolic office sometime prior to A. D. 45.—Acts 14:14.

As the severe persecutions and ravages against the Church continued, others from among the apostles must have fallen in martyrs' death; for in the record found in Galatians, 1:18,19, Paul styles James the Lord's brother as one of the apostles. This was about A. D. 58, about 25 years after the organization of the church and the origin of the apostolic office.

About 60 A. D., Paul styles Andronicus and Junia, as those who are of note among the apostles; also 1 Thessalonians, 1:1, lists Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy as being the writers of the epistle, and in second chapter, verse 6, they intimate that they are "apostles of Christ."

From the divine recordings we cannot doubt that the apostleship was continued during the greater part of the first century. However, in A. D. 70, with the destruction of Jerusalem, by the Roman army under Titus, the church was dispersed, being persecuted and driven into all corners of the world by the persecutors of the Jewish nation. During these great persecutions, no doubt the apostolic office fell in disuse, for the apostles could not meet after the death of each one to select a successor, being dispersed far and near, and under fear of death at any time from the enemies of the church.

With the destruction of Jerusalem, and the closing of the Sacred Canon, authentic church history closes for several decades, and the noted

church historian Harbut, in his *Story of the Christian Church*, says, "For fifty years after St. Paul's life a curtain hangs over the church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises, about A. D. 120, with the writings of the earliest church-fathers, we find a church in many aspects very different from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul."—page 41.

Should it have been a different church, however? Should not the same church been manifest in all periods of the Gospel Age? The same church, with the same form, doctrine, faith and zeal? We believe that it should, and that Christ still desires to work in the same manner as ever through his church.

In the first Corinthian letter, the apostle Paul likens the church unto a human body with all members necessary, and working in perfect unity. In this beautiful picture the various officers are likened to the members of the body, the hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears, each having their divinely appointed function to perform.

In his conclusion Paul states, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."—1 Cor. 12:27, 28.

We will all, I believe, contend that the offices of prophets (preachers), and of teachers, are still in the church, and that the gifts of healing, helps, governments, and diversities of tongues are manifest in the present day church,

and also that the gift of miracles is desirable. Then, should the apostolic office be deemed unnecessary, and left outside of the Christian Church? If God has set apostles in the church, who are we that we should refuse to accept them along with the other workers in their various capacities, as God has deemed fit to place them in the body, the church?

That apostles, along with prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, were necessary, and still remain as essential as ever, we may realize from Ephesians, 4:11-13, in which Paul states that Christ "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Should we refuse then to accept the apostolic organization again into the Church of God, just because some organization has brought it into disrepute? Should we refuse the truths of baptism, inheritance of the righteous, the Sabbath, and the many others, which various sects of Christendom have incorporated with their semi-truths, and false doctrines? Or should we, once we are brought face to face with this truth in the primitive church practice, again reestablish the church on the old foundation, which our Saviour established in the beginning?

In Revelations, 19:7, 8, is heard the voices of the multitude praising God, saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for

the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." In the following chapter is brought to view the vision of the bride, the holy city, of which it is said, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

Yes, dear reader, there is a preparation work to do. The bride has to make herself ready for she is not ready now. But, at the coming of the bridegroom, she will be prepared, and the Lamb will "present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," but it shall "be holy and without blemish."—Eph. 5:27.

There is one way, and one way only, that the church can be prepared. Only one way to make herself ready. Only one way to be a church without spot, wrinkle, or blemish, but holy, a glorious body. The prophet has pointed out the way! May we follow!

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—Jer. 6:16.

May we find faith and grace to take our stand for the apostolic Church of God, in name, practice, faith, zeal, power, purity, charity, and organization; that, as the bride of Christ, we may be ready, without spot, wrinkle, blemish, or any such thing, but be a glorious, holy body, in which the Lord will delight.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with You all. Amen.

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THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS.

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And the dragon was enraged against the woman, and went away to make war against that remainder of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus. Rev. 12: 17. And I fell before his feet to worship him; and he says to me, See, no! I am a fellow-servant with thee, and of those brethren with thee who have the testimony of Jesus; worship God. (For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of this prophecy.) Rev. 19: 10. *Emphatic Diaglott.*

WHAT is the testimony of Jesus brought to view in these two passages? Let us carefully examine the word of God with reference to this subject. We believe the Bible is its own expositor on this as well as other subjects. "We want the truth on every point," and if we have it on every point we must examine every point carefully, prayerfully, and separately by the word of God. Those who are at all acquainted with the positions of S. D. Adventists know full well what a theory is built upon these two passages. First we are taught that the dragon is wroth with the remnant, or last end, of the woman's seed, that this can only apply to those of the woman's seed who are living in the last days, as they are the remnant, or last end of the church. Second, we are taught that this remnant must have among them the spirit of prophecy in order to have the testimony of Jesus; and as they (S. D. Adventists) are the only people who keep the commandments of God and have this spirit of prophecy, they are the remnant, and the ONLY remnant of God's people upon earth, and in order to be saved we must identify ourselves with them as a people,