

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

WALKING AMONG THE CANDLESTICKS

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Revelation 2:1

The Greek word which is most often translated as church in the New Testament is “ekklesia” and literally means an assembly or congregation. We might say that a NT church is a called out group of GOD’s people gathered together in one location. If you were to ask ten different people the question, “what is a New Testament church?” you would probably get ten different answers. If these ten people were affiliated with a church (of some type) they would be sure to identify the one they belonged to as being what the scripture describes as a church regardless of what the scripture may have to say about it.

The LORD said, “*I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” (Mat 16:18) In the book of Acts we can see the LORD performing that work which HE came into the world to perform. “*And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*” (Acts 2:47) A church is not an organization, a religious society, nor anything which men have a hand in producing. Neither is it a building made of wood, stone, or metal. But it is indeed “*building not made with hands*”. As Peter described it, “*Ye also, as lively (or living) stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*” (1Pe 2:5-10)

Most often the conception of men is that men have the power to “form a church” or “join a church” or even build one, but this concept is not taught in the scripture. The apostles never “planted” churches, organized them, nor did they in any wise build them. True churches are established by HIM who is the HEAD of the church. “*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*” (Col 1:18)

The church is spoken of as a living organism which has its power and cohesiveness not in its rules, structures, covenants, or creeds but in CHRIST HIMSELF. “*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.*” (Eph 1:22-23) A true NT church cannot function without HIS daily presence nor can it be sustained without HIS constant supply.

The apostle John was given the plain revelation of what the stars and the candlesticks which are mentioned in our text represent in Rev.1:20 *"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."* It is interesting that the churches (those gathered in the various cities mentioned) are likened unto candle-sticks and not candles. All that a candlestick is, is a holder for the candle. In this illustration CHRIST is the candle for HE is indeed the LIGHT of HIS people.

This is never demonstrated more clearly than here in the book of the Revelation where HE issued warnings to these churches and reminded them of HIS way and doctrine. Then history records that none of these churches are still around today so we will learn from that that whenever HE removes the candle from the candlestick that it will cease to be a church. How utterly dependent the LORD's true churches are upon HIM. They can neither go out nor come in, rise up or sit down without HIM.

The average so called "church" today would never know if the LORD was ever in it or departed from it because they have an agenda, a plan, and an organization in place that depends on men to carry it out and does not need any outside help. They determine who will be a part of it and clamor to gain new members by whatever means is at their disposal. How different is that concept from what HE demonstrated in Acts 2:47. HE who *"walks among the candlesticks"* has taught us that :

The GLORY of the church is CHRIST. HE is the HEAD of the body. Col. 1:18 says, *"that in all things he might have the preeminence."* The church exists for the purpose of magnifying the glory of HIS person. The church can add nothing to HIM who is worthy of all praise but is merely the stage in this world where it is plainly demonstrated that *"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."* (Rev 11:15) *"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:"*(Eph 3:10-11) The church does not exist for the exaltation of preachers but for the glory of CHRIST alone. Woe be to that man or group of men who would attempt to be "lords over GOD's heritage" who love to have the preeminence by exalting their position above that of a mere servant. Through the years there have been many who have turned their role as an undershepherd sent to watch over GOD's flock into a position of kingship over them. There is but ONE head of the Church and HE does not share HIS glory with any nor has HE established any hierarchies among HIS people. HE hates those who would subjugate those whom HE has delivered from all dominion but HIS own. (see Rev. 2:6,15)

The LIGHT of the church is CHRIST. *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* (2Cor 4:6) The NT church and the gospel are inseparably linked. Wherever you find one you will find the other. There can be no preaching of the gospel where there is not a clear message of CHRIST as the absolute SAVIOR of HIS people. Where the gospel is preached one will always hear that CHRIST has finished the work that HE came to do, HE has obtained eternal redemption for HIS elect bride. The true gospel knows of no cooperative effort between men and CHRIST.

The LIFE of the church is CHRIST. Though the church is a living organism (see I Pet.2:5) it has no life of its own but is kept alive only by the constant supply of the LIFE which HE supplies. When HE no longer walks among the candlesticks, supplying fire and light that gathering of people are but Ichabod, *"the glory is departed"* regardless of their programs or plans for perpetuity nor how long they may have existed up until that time. *"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."* (John 15:5)