

# Identifying The Lord's Church #1

**Introduction.** The Scheffer case of 1902 is the first case of the identification and conviction of a murderer based on fingerprint evidence. Human fingerprints are detailed, unique, difficult to alter, and durable over the life of an individual, making them suitable as markers of human identity. Mankind has known for a long time that no two individuals have fingerprints exactly alike.

It is absolutely necessary for every Christian to know the markers of the New Testament church. Some will tell you this is not important because the different denominations are the branches of John 15. But this is not correct for that illustration would demand a tree that bears different kinds of fruit. Not only is this impossible based on natural laws, but it is impossible because the context says that individuals are the branches (John 15:5). We will learn the New Testament markers for God's church in these two sermons today.

## ***I. It Must Wear The Proper Name***

- A. If you are looking for John Smith, and you found John Jones, you have found the wrong person.
- B. The Bible gives the proper names for the church: "church" (Colossians 1:18), "church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2), "church of Christ" (Romans 16:16), "church of the Lord" (Acts 20:28), "church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23), and "the way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Why would men designate themselves by human heroes, e.g., Lutheran? Or name themselves after some form of organization, e.g., Presbyterian? Or adopt titles according to some individual point of doctrine they espouse, e.g., Baptist? There is no biblical basis for this practice. There is no solitary, exclusive name for the church. But whatever you call it, you need to call it what it is, and not what it is not.
- C. Furthermore, if you find another John Smith, he will have different characteristics from the one you were looking for. The same is true with the church. The church is not a Pentecostal church just because it was established on Pentecost. The church is not a Baptist church just because it advocates baptism. The church is not a Congregational church just because it is organized congregationally. The church is the church of God because God planned it (Ephesians 3:11) and the church is the church of Christ because He shed His blood for it (Acts 20:28).

## ***II. It Must Embrace The Proper Birthplace***

- A. Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:4-6). If we were to hear of a Christ born in another place, he would be an impostor.
- B. Jerusalem was the birthplace of the church (Isaiah 2:2-3; Zechariah 1:16; 8:20-23; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:12-14).
- C. If you find a religious body established in China, India, Germany, America, or Medina, you have found the wrong one.

## ***III. It Must Embody The Proper Age***

- A. If you knew that John Smith was 40 years old, and you found one that was 20 years old, you have found the wrong one.

- B. As a man or woman's age is reckoned from birth, so the age of the church is reckoned from its establishment (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 47; 8:3; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).
- C. If a church or religious body is founded in the days of Abraham, John the Baptist, Charles Russell, or Joseph Smith, it is the wrong one.

#### ***IV. It Must Contain The Proper Founder***

- A. Jesus Christ is the one who built the church (Matthew 16:18). He is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). He is the foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:10-11; Ephesians 2:19-22). He is its only Savior (Acts 4:12; Ephesians 5:23).
- B. One that is founded by Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, John Smith, A.J. Tomlinson, or Mohammed are counterfeits.

**Conclusion.** We do not have to trace the "unbroken chain" all the way back to the first century to make sure that we are members of the right church. Suppose a man sees a truck with a "UPS" logo travel into a tunnel. That same man will see the truck emerge from the tunnel with the same logo affixed to its side. The church went into the wilderness bearing all these marks, and it must come out the same way. All we need to do is use the same seed in our day as was used in the first century (Luke 8:11). Is the church of which you are a member deficient in these elements? If it is, find the group that replicates the Bible pattern.