

A Plea For Christ

Introduction. Jesus Christ is the same “yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). His word is as immutable as God; His truth is as eternal as heaven; and His life is as pure as the snow. He said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away” (Mark 13:31).

In the past, when men saw that denominationalism was far removed from the word of God, they sought to restore the first century church. The fundamental message of this determined effort was the preeminence of Christ. This plea for restoration may be succinctly defined as a plea for Christ. There are several particulars in this plea which are worthy of our study.

I. *The Name Of Christ*

- A. This plea entreats that the name of Christ should be worn by His people, to the exclusion of all human designations, for several reasons.
 1. It is the name in which we are baptized (Acts 2:38).
 2. It is the preeminent name (Philippians 2:9-11).
 3. It is the only name in which we can be saved (Acts 4:12).
 4. It is the name which was divinely given (Acts 11:26).
 5. It is the name by which we should do everything (Colossians 3:17).
- B. Human names were denounced by apostolic authority as religious designations (1 Corinthians 1:12-16). Paul said that the wearing of human names to designate religious parties was evidence of carnality (1 Corinthians 3:4-5).
- C. Several well-known scholars and commentators through the years knew of the wickedness of not wearing the name of Christ.
 1. Albert Barnes wrote, “The name was evidently given because they were followers of Christ. That it was given in derision is not probable. It was readily assumed by the apostles. It is the most honored name that can be conferred upon a mortal, a name which rises above every other name. It is a bond to unite in one family all those who love the Lord Jesus.”
 2. John Wesley wrote, “Would God that all party names and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world were forgotten, and that we, as humble, loving disciples, might sit down at the Master’s feet, read His Holy word, imbibe His Spirit and transcribe His life into our own ... With regard to the name Christian, I would say, there is none like it; give it to me, and in life and in death I would glorify God in this name.”
 3. Martin Luther wrote, “I pray you, leave my name alone; and not to call yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for anyone ... Cease, my

dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions. Away with them all, and let us call ourselves only Christians, after Him from whom our doctrine comes."

4. Charles Spurgeon wrote, "I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. I hope the Baptist name will soon perish; but let Christ's name last forever."

II. ***The Word Of Christ***

- A. The sufficient "book of discipline" for His church is the word of Christ, the Bible (John 16:14-15; 20:21-23). It is sufficient to furnish the Christian unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- B. If the scriptures are sufficient to furnish the man of God unto all good works, written disciplines of human origin are unnecessary.
 1. The word "creed" comes from the Latin verb, *credo*, meaning "I believe." Human creeds are incomplete statements and cannot be universally accepted.
 - a) At best they are nothing more than the opinions of uninspired men. They are written and enforced without divine sanction.
 - b) If a creed contains more than the Bible, it contains too much; if it contains less than the Bible, it does not contain enough; if it teaches the same subjects as the Bible, it is not necessary!
 2. Human creeds are the uninspired products of speculation and contribute tremendously to the spread and perpetuation of denominationalism.

III. ***The Authority Of Christ***

- A. Most of our current religious controversies are not over questions of interpretation, but questions of authority.
- B. There is a clear "chain" of authority in the Bible.
 1. Authority originates with God (James 1:17-18; Hebrews 1:1-2).
 2. Authority comes through Christ (Matthew 17:5; 28:18; John 12:47-48).
 3. Authority was delegated to the apostles (John 14:26; 16:13-14; 1 John 4:6).
 4. Authority is contained within the scriptures (James 1:25; 2 Peter 1:3-4; Jude 3-5).
- C. There is no evidence in the Bible that divine authority resides in anyone or anything else. In matters of faith and doctrine, the church is an absolute monarchy subject to the will of Christ which is the absolute law from which there is no appeal (Colossians 1:18).
- D. When you restore the authority of Christ over His church and convince all to accept His authority, you will solve many of the problems which

plague the religious world. You will have swept away all popes, councils, synods, presbyteries, conferences, associations and assemblies which, in the past, have presumed to speak with authority.

IV. ***The Church Of Christ***

- A. People have heard so much talk about Luther's Church or Wesley's Church that they are liable to forget that our Lord Himself established a church (Matthew 16:18). This church came into existence on the day of Pentecost.
- B. There are a number of proper characteristics of the Lord's church.
 - 1. Name (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Hebrews 12:23).
 - 2. Birthplace (Zechariah 1:16; Isaiah 2:2-3; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:12-14; 2:1).
 - 3. Age (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4).
 - 4. Founder (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23).
 - 5. Law (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 - 6. Organization (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9).
 - 7. Worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
 - 8. Entrance (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10; John 3:3, 5; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 2:47).
- C. The only church to which I want to belong is the church of Christ. We must go back of Wesley, back of Calvin, back of Luther, back of Rome, back of Constantinople, all the way back to Jerusalem and find, reproduce and restore the church of Christ.

Conclusion. Baptism is not the end, but just the beginning, of Christian life and service. It is only the consummation of the divine plan whereby we are adopted into the family of God (Galatians 3:27; John 3:5). Conversion is the complete surrender of self and substance to God, the submission of the human will to the divine (Galatians 2:20).

Paul said, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9). God extends to us the privilege of wearing the name of Christ. You can take hold of that privilege this moment if you will trust and obey Him. Let the Savior in and let Him assume authority over your soul. Are you ready?