

WHO IS MY BROTHER?

February 16, 2014

Christ proclaimed to Peter and the other apostles, **“I will build my church”** (Mt. 16:18a). There can be no mistake regarding what our Master’s intention was when He made that statement. His purpose was to build one church so the “eternal purpose” of God could be realized through Him (Eph. 3:11). Christ said that He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk. 19:10); therefore, the saved must be a member of His one church which was purchased with His blood (Acts 2:47; 20:28). Those that have become members of His church, by the means outlined in the New Testament, have often been berated by the numerous denominations of the world for not accepting into fellowship all organizations that claim to be followers of Christ. Many once faithful congregations have become denominational themselves for not exercising the same exclusiveness that Christ Himself exercised. Far too many congregations and members of Christ’s body have not asked “who is my brother?”

This dilemma is not peculiar to our modern age. Almost three thousand years ago, Ahab, the king of Israel, made the same mistake. During his reign, the Syrian king, Benhadad, sought to destroy Israel and to bring it under his subjection. However, God blessed the armies of Israel and, on two occasions (1 Kings 20), they defeated the armies of Syria and its king. After the second defeat of Syria, Benhadad sent his ambassadors to Ahab to seek mercy. Once in the presence of the king, the Syrian entourage said, “Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee, let me live” (1 Kings 20:32). Ahab replied, *“Is he yet alive? he is my brother”* (1 Kings 20:32b).

His reply led to his and Israel’s ultimate destruction by God. Ahab was already an evil and sinful man (1 Kings 16:30), but his continual lack of obedience to God helped to seal his fate. His first mistake was not utterly destroying the Syrians as God had commanded when He said He would deliver them into the hand of Israel (1 Kings 20:13); instead Ahab said, “He is my brother.” To make matters worse, Ahab agreed to make peace with a man that was not in fellowship and peace with God. The Prophet told him, “Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of *thy* hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people” (1 Kings 20:42).

Ahab’s sin didn’t start when he failed to destroy Syria or by trying to make peace with them; it started when he fellowshipped those who God did not! Paul warned, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness” (2 Cor. 6:14). God’s people cannot be in spiritual fellowship with non believers, even if they do claim to be followers of God. It is of the utmost importance to congregations and members alike to know who one’s brother is, but also to understand who is not a brother.

Those who do not recognize the authority of God are not brethren to God’s people. It is not possible to fellowship those who claim to have received modern day revelations from God. The Spirit has made it clear that the revelation of the “last days” came through the Son of God (Heb. 1:2; Mt. 17:5). Neither is it possible to fellowship those who teach a plan of salvation that is contrary to what we find in the New Testament. Men are not saved by faith only! The only place in the New Testament where those two words are used in conjunction is found in the book of James when he said, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Js. 2:24). It is not possible to be in fellowship with one who teaches baptism is not essential to salvation because Peter clearly stated, “The like figure

whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21).

Faithful brethren are those who trust the Lord enough to obey Him. Christ said, “**For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother**” (Mk. 3:35). Paul explained that for one to become a part of Christ’s church, he must be “buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). Without being a member of Christ’s church, one cannot be a brother to the faithful people of God! It is paramount to understand that membership in a denomination does not place one in fellowship with Christ or with those that are members of His church.

Each member of the Lord’s church must ask, “Who is my brother?” If God does not recognize a person or group of people as being in Him, then neither can those who are his disciples! Keep in mind that the church is the body of Christ (Col. 1:18), and only those who are a part of His church will be saved in the end (Acts 2:47).