



...Set For the Defence of the Gospel. (Phil 1:17)

DEFENDER OF TRUTH

T H E M E :

The
Nature
of The Church

MAGAZINE

APRIL - JUNE, 2022 | VOLUME 2 | NO. 2

DEFENDER OF TRUTH
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EDITORIAL

We welcome our esteemed readers to the second edition of Defender of Truth for this year. We thank God for His faithfulness and equally thank you for keeping faith with us since the relaunch of this magazine. So far, we believe God has used us to reveal the truth of His word thereby edifying the readers. We promise to continue to do this by His grace.

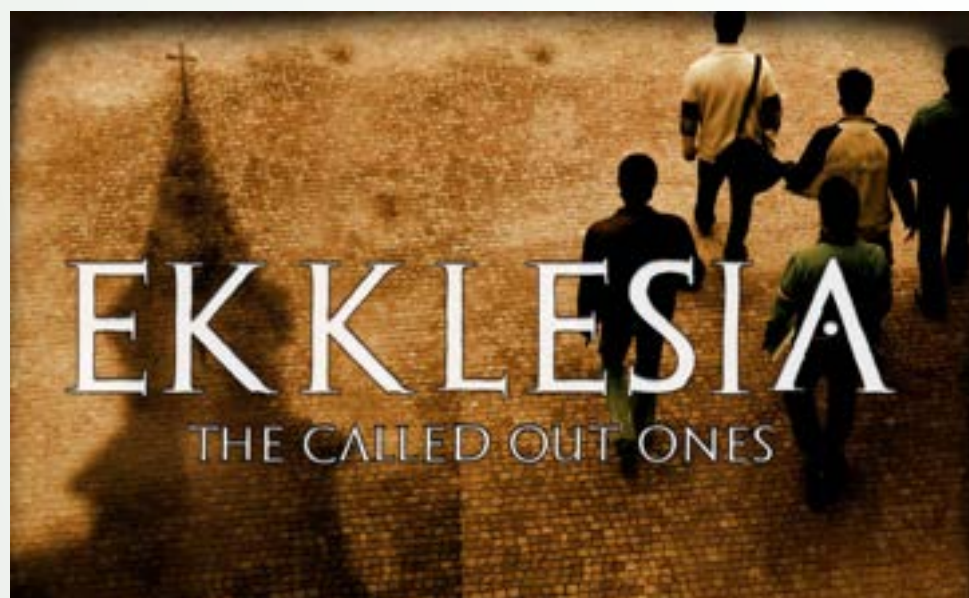
In this edition, we are still beaming our search light on the Church of Christ and the central theme of our discussion is the Nature of the Church, The following topics are considered on this theme, the Church as the Called out Body of Christ, the Church as the Kingdom of God, the Church as Vineyard of God, the Church as the Temple of God and the Church as the Household of God.

THE CHURCH AS THE CALLED OUT BODY OF CHRIST

by *Kayode Adekunle*

INTRODUCTION

Many descriptive terms are used in the New Testament to create identity for the Church. These descriptive terms are revealed and used by the Holy Spirit to show the uniqueness of the Church of the living God and thereby differentiate it from denominations. These descriptions come under one umbrella known as the Nature of the Church and one of them is looking at the Church as the Called out Body of Christ.



Who are the Called out?

The word "church" as used in the New Testament especially from the context of its usage in Matt 16:18, where Christ promised to "build His Church" is derived from the Greek word known as "ekklessia". This means "the called out" or "to call out". Another Greek word that brings out more the meaning of the word church is "kuriakos" which means "of or belonging to the Lord"

The Bible makes it clear that the church is made of up of people that are "called out of darkness into light", Peter has this to say in 1 Peter 2:9 **"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of**

darkness into His marvelous light" Those that are called and obeyed the calling are The chosen.

The Nature of the Calling

The call is divine because it is done by God through the gospel of Christ 1Thess2:13-14 for the purpose of salvation **"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you"** 1Peter 5:10. Christians are called into the household of God to become His children Rom 9:25-26. They are called to be saints set apart for the service of God through Jesus Christ. Paul says this to the Church in Corinth **"To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours"** The Christian calling is made possible by the suffering of Christ 1Petb2:21 and they are called into fellowship into the Body of Christ to worship God and thereby work out their salvation with the hope of inheriting eternal blessing and rest. Paul has this to say in his second letter to Timothy **"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"**

The Church as the Body of Christ

One feature of the Church in the New Testament that underscores her relationship with Christ is describing the church as the Body of Christ. Paul confirmed this in his letters to the churches in Ephesus and Colossae. Eph1:22-23 and Col1:18 both confirmed the church as the body of Christ and that He is the head of the church.

Describing the church as the body of Christ also reveals the undenominational nature of the church. The bible says there is only one body Eph 4: 4 and in essence only one church. Christians all over the world are baptized into one body, which is the church. Paul says this to the church in Corinth **"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."** 1Cor12:13. This further emphasizes the fact that the Church is not a denomination. It is very clear in the New Testament that God condemns division and

doctrines of men as evident in the denominations that are abound in the world 1Cor 1:10 **"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."** shows the desire of God for oneness in practice, Acts 2:42, 11 John 9-11 and Col 3:17 shows His desire for oneness of doctrine.

NATURE OF THE BODY

Christ is the Head of the Body

The New Testament teaches that Christ has absolute authority over the church, His dominion over the church is absolute **"And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church"** Eph 1:22-23. The church belongs to Christ Matt 16:18 and she is expected to be subject to Him in all things **"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."** Eph 5:22-24. The implication of this is that whatever Christ does not permit must not be done in His Body (the church).



Christians are members of the Body of Christ

Unlike what the denominations believe and teach, the Body of Christ is not made of denominational churches but by individual Christians. Christians individually are baptized into the universal body of Christ but are expected to function in a local setting. The bible says **"there are many members but one body"** Rom 12:4-5. The functions of the body are carried out in local church where individual Christians are organized as a local church 1Cor 12:12 says **"For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."** The whole illustration in 1Cor 12:12-27 shows how members in an individual body work to make the body to function properly. Paul told the Ephesians that **"Every joint supplying its part makes the body**

strong" Eph 4:16.

Conclusion:

The uniqueness of the church in the New Testament is seen through the divine design that God gave to it. The way it came into being to the way it operates are all indications of the fact that the church belongs to God and He in His own wisdom, hands everything over to Christ. The church does not belong to any man or group of men. Denominations are not approved by God and anyone who has anything to do with them is sinning and such a one must repent before it is too late.

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD

by Jobalo Oshikanlu

Bible Gems: "Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). "Therefore, since we are receiving **a kingdom which cannot be shaken**, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear..." (Hebrews 12:28).

In those days, John the Baptist preached that the kingdom of heaven was "at hand" (Matthew 3:1-2). "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.'" Hear the CEB translation of Matthew 3:2: "Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!" The question for the reader is, was the kingdom of God then at hand, and still today at hand?



What is the kingdom of God?

The kingdom which John the Baptist and our Lord Jesus Christ spoke of at the beginning of the New Testament as being then "at hand" (i.e., near or very close) was the kingdom that had been foretold in the Old Testament as a coming kingdom to be established by God. In other words, for several hundreds of years earlier, Old Testament prophets prophesied of the coming kingdom of the Almighty God. John the Baptist and Jesus finally came to announce that the awaited kingdom was about to arrive. In fact, the Lord Jesus, while He walked this earth as a man, announced then in Mark 9:1 as follows: "I assure you and most solemnly say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste (experience) death before they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power" (AMP). Did that truly happen and, if it did, when did it happen, and what was that kingdom?

In Matthew 16:13-20, Jesus had asked his disciples about the views that men held in general about Him, the Son of man. After listening to their responses that various people saw Him as different Old Testament Prophets risen again, Jesus asked for their own views concerning who He was. Peter knew that Jesus was not just another prophet through whom God was speaking. He identified Jesus as the Son of the Living God and the Messiah that was promised in the Old Testament. Jesus then pronounced Peter as being highly favoured. He also made it clear that this faith that Peter has expressed in Jesus as the Son of God is the foundation upon which He would build

His church. The play on words that Jesus did in the 18th verse in referring to Peter (Greek, *petros*) and the rock (Greek, *petra*) demonstrated the fact that the church would not be built upon Peter, who was a small stone, but rather on the solid rock and foundation of the divinity of Jesus.

Jesus then promised in the 19th verse that Peter would have a unique part to play in the critical days of the church's early history. He would be entrusted by the Master with the "keys" of authority to the **kingdom**. We find Peter using these keys on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 verses 14-47 when the church was established on the earth. Jesus had spoken of "building His church" (Greek, *ekklesia*, a called-out body of people) and giving Peter "the keys of the kingdom". He had also separately spoken of the kingdom coming "with power" during the lifetime of some of his immediate disciples, and this "power" was the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) who came on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). **The Lord Jesus therefore made it unquestionably clear in Matthew 16:18-19 that the kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament is one and the same with the church of our Lord which was to be established on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2.**

The kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament and Fulfilled in the New Testament:

There are many prophetic passages in the Old Testament that set forth God's plans for the kingdom of the Messiah. One of the especially important passages tells of a night dream of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (Daniel 2:1-30). Nebuchadnezzar knew that the dream was unusual and had some special meaning for his life and his kingdom. He called all his wise men and fortune tellers and asked to know the interpretation of his dream. None could tell. Finally, Daniel was given a special revelation from God concerning the dream.

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that the great image he had seen in his dream represented four great kingdoms which would rule the earth before God's kingdom would come to consume and outlive them and fill the entire earth. The first kingdom was represented on the image by a head of gold. That kingdom represented Nebuchadnezzar's own Babylon (Daniel 2:37-38). What Nebuchadnezzar did not know at that time was that his kingdom would fall to another world power in 536 B.C. The second kingdom was represented on the image by the breast and arms which were made of silver. The fall of Babylon is discussed later in the book of Daniel. Belshazzar was then ruling the nation and the government fell to the Medo-Persian invasion (Daniel 5). Out of the Medo-Persian alliance came the great Persian empire which was the strongest ruling force in the world until it fell to Alexander the Great in 330 B.C. The third kingdom in the dream was the Grecian empire, which was the belly and thighs of brass on the image. Alexander's Greek empire was divided and,

therefore, passed from the scene of world influence before the birth of Christ. The fourth great world government was the Roman empire established by Augustus (Octavius) Caesar in 30 B.C. It was the legs of iron and feet of iron and clay on the image. Daniel informed Nebuchadnezzar that in the days of the kings of this fourth empire, God would set up His kingdom (Daniel 2:44). This kingdom set up by God would stand forever, and break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms. That prediction posited that sometime after the beginning of the Roman empire (30 B.C.) and during its existence, the kingdom would be established or brought into being. The New Testament history takes place in the days of the Roman kings. *"In those days came John the Baptist"* (Matthew 3:1-2). What days? (Luke 3:1-2) *"In the Fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" – "Preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, repent ye; for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand"*.

According to Daniel, *"And the stone that struck the image became a great **mountain** and filled the whole earth"* (2:35b). It was this same "mountain" (which Daniel calls the kingdom of the God of heaven) that the prophets Isaiah and Micah described as the house of God (Isaiah 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2), and which the New Testament describes as the church of Christ (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Timothy 3:15). We already showed that Jesus made it unquestionably clear in Matthew 16:18-19 that the kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament is one and the same with His church which was to be established on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. God's kingdom would be an assembly of citizens under His reign. It would not be a military army that conquered nations, but rather a covenant community of brothers and sisters worshiping God through Jesus Christ, a kingdom built upon a confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It would be a Kingdom, the weapons of whose warfare *"are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled"* (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

The kingdom in the New Testament:

The word "kingdom" is the New Testament figure to illustrate the nature of the government of the church as, in government, the Lord's Church is a Kingdom. Jesus Christ is the King (Heb 1:8; 1 Timothy 6:14-15) and the New Testament is His law (John 1:17; 12:48; 17:8; Hebrews 7:11-19; 1 Corinthians 9:21). All Christians are citizens in this kingdom (Ephesians 2:19). Many people think that the "kingdom" and the "church" are different bodies or relationships. They say that the church is now in the world and kingdom will come later. In reality, the church of Christ is the Kingdom of God. In describing the spiritual status of Christians, Colossians 1:13 states that *"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and has conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love"*. The Apostle John in Revelation 1:9 declares: *"I, John, your brother and companion in ... the kingdom ... of Jesus Christ"* (see also Revelation 5:9-10).

After the day of Pentecost and coming of the Holy Spirit, the

kingdom was always spoken of, not anymore as being "at hand" but as being in existence (Acts 8:12; 20:25; 28:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:12). In coming unto the Church, we receive the Kingdom (Hebrews 12:22-28). The Lord's Supper is in the Kingdom (Luke 22:16-18, 29-30).

How to Be a Citizen of the Kingdom of God:

To be a citizen of God's kingdom, you must:

1. Enter in by the new birth. Jesus said: *"unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"* (John 3:5). To be "born of water" is to be baptized in water for forgiveness of sins in obedience to the Lord (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:35-38). To be born of "the Spirit" is to have a changed or new life through the word of God (Titus 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 6:63). These require and start with:
 - Believing Jesus Christ and His gospel (John 3:35-36; 8:24);
 - Repenting of all sins (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30-31);
 - Confessing faith in Christ (Romans 10:9-10); and
 - Getting baptized (immersed) in water for the forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38; 22:16).
2. Receive the kingdom as "a little child" and as a school (Mark 10:15; Acts 2:42; 5:42; 11:26; 20:20; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; Hebrews 5:12-14).
3. Do God's will (Matthew 7:21), regularly worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24) and in the beauty of holiness (Psalm 29:2; Romans 12:1-2).
4. Center your affections on heavenly things (Philippians 3:12-15; Colossians 3:1-4) and be ready to sacrifice (Mark 10:23-31).

On the final return of our Lord Jesus, there will be no entering into the Kingdom for those not already in there. Rather, upon His return *"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will **gather out of His kingdom** all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire ... **Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*** (Matthew 13:41-43).

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THE VINEYARD OF GOD

by Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba

The New Testament church is a called out body of people who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. The gospel of Christ, which is God's power to save man is the instrument by which members of this church were called (Romans 1:16; II Thessalonians 2:14). Having responded to the call of God, members of the church were translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13) and they are expected to walk as children of light (1 John 1:5-7).

The church exists **"in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord"** (Ephesians 3:10-11). Thus, it is a sacred institution that no human Institution can be compared to it. In fact, the church was purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28).

Meanwhile, as a body of saved individuals, the church sustains certain relationships. These relationships present to the mind certain characteristics and concepts about the nature of the church. As such, we find that several metaphors were used in the New Testament to describe the church. For example, we can see from the scriptures that in relation to God, the church is called the family of God (Galatians 3:26); in relation to construction, the church is called the building of God (1 Corinthians 3:9). As to form of government, the church is a kingdom (Colossians 1:13) and in relation to Christ, the church is the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:32). At the same time, in relation to the work accomplished, the church is called the vineyard of the Lord (I Corinthians 3:9).

In this edition of Defender of Truth, we shall examine these various relationships in order to give the readers a better understanding of what the church is. In this way a greater appreciation of the Divine institution for which Christ died can be brought about. Meanwhile, for the purpose of this writing, we are going to see the church as the vineyard of God.

The Church as God's Vineyard

When we think of a vineyard, what comes to our mind is fruit-bearing as well as a place of labour. We, as Christians, are workers in God's vineyard. The song writer, Isaiah Baltzell has a very lovely song which indicates the need for each child of God to go and work today in His vineyard. It is titled "I Want to be a Worker for the Lord." The song encourages every Christian to determine to be engaged in the work of the Lord. God has given us a work to do (Ephesians 2:10).

In looking at the church as God's vineyard, we find that the church is the sowing agency today which is wholly saddled with the responsibility of preaching the gospel (Philippians 1:4-5; 2:15-16; I Thessalonians 1:8; I Timothy 3:15). On the other hand, the Gospel is the seed to be planted (Luke 8:11) without being corrupted with the doctrines and commandments of men (Matthew 15:8; Colossians 2:20, 23 cf. Deuteronomy 22:9). The Christians who have been divinely called by the gospel are the labourers in God's kingdom.

As God's children, we are expected to work in our Father's vineyard (Matthew 21:28-31). Paul referred to the church as a **"husbandry"** or tillage (1 Corinthians 3:9). This metaphor, describing the local church, suggests diligent toil (in this case of the apostle Paul and his fellow workers) and spiritual

fruitfulness. To emphasize that we are all laborers in God's kingdom (Matthew 21:43), the Lord stressed the laborer in the vineyard aspect (Matthew 21:28-31, 33-43). In this, we as Christians sow seed (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23), as well as bear fruit (John. 15:8; Galatians 5:22-24). Jesus expects us to work in the church. Thus He has hired laborers into His vineyard (Matthew 20:1). Paul encouraged the church in Corinth to continue to abound in the work of the Lord with the assurance that the labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

There is a great need to work in His vineyard. It is not enough just to work; we must work in His Vineyard! Ephesians 3:21 says, **"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."** Many religious people today are working at many endeavors, but God is not receiving the glory because they are not working in His vineyard. Brethren today are working through various institutions, and enterprises (outside His vineyard) claiming to work for the Master. This is also not acceptable by God as there is no authority for such.

Also, we need to realize the need to be faithful labourers in His vineyard. This involves fruit-bearing. **"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God"** (Romans 7:4). **"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples"** (John 15:8).

It is important to state that many are lackadaisical; complacent and lukewarm who are wandering around in the vineyard (Revelation 3:16), but they are not faithful laborers! What about them? John 15:2,6 shows that every plant that does not bear fruit will be taken away. Serious labourers are needed in God's vineyard. The Lord even instructed us to pray for more labourers to be sent, **"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest"** (Luke 10:2). The reward or wages will be well worth it. **"Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together"** (John 4:35-36).

God, the Vinedresser (John 15:1) expects fruits from each branch (disciple), but only in proportion to their privileges and blessings. In this we see the necessity to abide in the Vine for apart from Him we can do nothing. And in this we see the infinite wisdom, knowledge, resources and faithfulness of God the Husbandman of His vineyard. His plans and arrangements will lead us to the home in preparation. Everything is within His power. He has promised us many precious blessings and He will not fail in accomplishing them. In essence, God takes care of all the branches of the Vine, that is, all who through obedience to the Gospel, who by faith are united to the Lord Jesus Christ. And every disciple (branch) who does not produce fruit after his own kind is cut off, cast forth and burned. Let us recognize the happiness and the safety of God's people and the many ways in which He blesses them.

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THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

by *Oladapo Olawale*

One of the different designations used to describe the church is that it is called the Household of God. The word 'Household' or 'House' is used in the bible to refer to physical families (Acts 10:2; Hebrews 11:7; Luke. 1:27); house, is used in this sense, to depict a family and not the physical building. A similar thought is employed by inspired New Testament writers who described the church in spiritual terms as the Household or the family of God (1Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6; 10:21; Eph. 2:19; 3:15).

This beautiful description of the people of God, not only suggests that they belong to Him but also indicates that He cares and is concerned about their welfare. The depiction of the church as the Family of God reveals to us the inestimable value God places on His relationship with His chosen people, greater than can be found in any physical family. Let us consider some basic features of this family of God.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD'S FAMILY – THE CHURCH

(a) God is the father of His Household (Eph. 3:14; 4:6; Matt. 23:9; 1 Cor. 8:6).

Aside from God being the father over His Family, He is also the only parent here. Similarly, God is the centre of authority and is undoubtedly in charge of His family applying His commandments equally to all (Acts 11:1-18; 17:23-31; Rom. 2:1-16; Eph. 2:11-16). God's family is ONE and not fragmented into denominations where His words are not respected as the authority. God is a concerned and caring father who does not neglect His children as He constantly fulfils His plans towards them (Eph. 1:1-14; Rom. 8:18-30). God as a spiritual father is incomparable with any earthly parent (Isaiah 49:15; Matthew 7:9). It is therefore a great privilege for members of God's family to have Him as their father (1 John 3:1).

Moreover, since God is the Father of His family, the church, it invariably means that His children are to bear semblance to Him in holiness and godly living because God is not the Father of the unholy, sinful, and unrighteous people of the world. Anyone who therefore engages in sin has Satan as his father regardless of whether or not he professes to serve God (1 John 3:4-10). Jesus also affirmed this to a group of Jews that believed in him, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do" (John 8:31,44). Without a doubt many who call upon God as Father are not His children. Whilst some having submitted themselves to the water of baptism, continue to indulge in sinful and unholy practices, many are yet to be born again of water and the Spirit. They still have Satan, the devil, as their father, and will continue to be Satan's children until they repent and obey the truth.

(b) Christ is a son over the House of God (Heb. 3: 1-6)

Verse 3 of the book of Hebrews stated Jesus to be the builder of God's house, under God the Father. Moses was only a "servant" in His house, but Jesus is the "Son" over God's house. God's house is made up of Christians, not the physical Israelites. In another sense,

Jesus serves over God's house as the High Priest through whom children of God can approach the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need (Hebrews 7:25; 10:21).

(c) Christians are Children of God and brothers and sisters to one another (Heb. 2:12; Matt. 23:8; 25:40).

All Christians are children of God and are regarded as Sons and Heirs (Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:7) through Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26). Christ is therefore our older brother. The process to become children of God is through a spiritual birth or being born of water and the spirit (i.e born again or baptism John 3:3-6). By a community reading of Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16 and Luke 24:46-47, the process of becoming a child of God can be summarised thus: when a sinner hears the gospel of Christ after being taught, he then needs to believe it, repents of his sins, confesses Jesus as the son of God and will then be immersed in water of baptism to receive forgiveness from his sins. This is a process of transformation from the old self to a new creature and one is then said to be in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17). The Apostle Paul puts this better when he said: **"For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ . . . And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise"** (Galatians 3:26, 27, 29).

As earlier noted, being children of God means obedient children in holy conduct. Anything short of that disqualifies one from being a child of God. Being children of God also means showing a family semblance of lives filled with love for one another, being kind and compassionate towards each other. Just as Christ laid down an example of love, Christians are to be imitators of Christ in love and holiness (John 13:35; Ephs 5:1,2; Gals 2:20).

BLESSINGS IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

Certain blessings are only available to those who are part of God's family. The overarching benefit of being a member of God's household is to be loved by Him; it is indeed a special privilege to be so loved by God, to be called His children (1 John 3:1). Ephesians 1: 3-14 summarised for us these spiritual blessings in Christ. Some of these benefits available to be enjoyed by Christians are briefly highlighted below:

(1) An Heir of God.

To be an heir simply means one who is legally entitled to benefit from someone's property (an inheritance). The image of inheritance suggests that Christians have a right to eternal life which God gives. To, therefore be a beneficiary of the Kingdom of God is indeed a great blessing. Romans 8:15-17 captures this beautifully thus: *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of, God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.* This inheritance which is said to be

"incorruptible, and undefiled, and does not fade away is reserved in heaven" (1 Pet. 1:4). There can be nothing richer and blessed than the inheritance of eternal life; it is far greater than any kind of physical inheritance a rich man may leave his children and ought to be so cherished.

(2) Access to God as Father is also a very precious benefit of being in the family of God. God's children can approach him in prayer as our heavenly father (Matt. 6:9). We are reminded of His fatherly care to the extent that we could ask Him for good things and be rest assured that He would not give us anything harmful in place of the good gifts we request of Him. (Matt. 7:9-11). This access to God as our father having been made possible by Christ, we are urged to boldly approach His throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). This privilege of being able to boldly approach God is available to His children and not open to those who are not members of His family.

(3) God's Fatherly Provisions.

God makes physical provisions for all His creatures. Those outside the family of God enjoy God's provisions of physical blessings in that He makes His sunrise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). However, God's spiritual blessings are limited to only those in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Unless one is "in Christ," he cannot enjoy the Father's provisions for man's spiritual needs. Although these blessings are open to everyone, one can only appropriate them to himself to enjoy by obeying the gospel. A child of God has access to God's fatherly provisions both spiritual and physical (Rom. 8:32; Jas. 1:17; Matt. 6:8; 6:33-34; 7:7-11).

(4) God's Fatherly Discipline/Correction.

Essential to God's relationship with His children are discipline and correction. This is similar to the loving relationship of a physical father and son. Divine discipline demonstrates divine love. "For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Heb. 12:6-11). God's children are blessed to have a heavenly Father who chastens them for their good. God desires each of His children to learn how He works ultimately for our good through the various situations we face and experience daily. We are expected to grow unto spiritual perfection as we endure our day-to-day struggles just as Christ was made perfect through suffering (Heb. 5:8-9). Rather than becoming bitter as a

result of our sufferings, we should learn to accept God's will like Paul who felt strong despite his thorn in the flesh and all other physical sufferings he faced (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

(5) God's Fatherly Protection.

God protects members of His family from harm. The Apostle Paul whilst warning of the danger of falling away assured of God's protective care thus: *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it* (1 Cor. 10:12). Paul also assured the Philippians of the peace of God, which passes all understanding and can keep hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). God preserves and keeps His children from evil (Psa. 121).

CONCLUSION

The Household of God is a great spiritual and eternal family to be in. God's people, having been redeemed from the condemnation of sin, are peculiar and holy to Him. Because God has no children outside His family, He will not save anyone outside His household. If anyone desires to be part of this great family, he ought to repent of his sins and be baptized. To remain in fellowship with God's family, one is required to continue to live in obedience to the heavenly father (1 John 1:7) and to be particularly good and loving to members of God's household (Gals 6: 10; Jn. 4:7, 20-21; 3:13-19). It follows then that anyone outside the household of God has no hope on the day of Judgement (1 Peter 4:17-18).

As a faithful member of God's family, one is ultimately guaranteed an unfading and incorruptible inheritance in heaven that cannot be likened to anything here on earth (1 Peter 1:4 -7). What a great honour to be a member of God's family!

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THE TEMPLE OF GOD

by Bro Opemipo Olusola

INTRO:

A temple is a sacred building or place where God and men meet. Gen.28:10-19. Jacob called it "God's camp" Gen.32:1-2. There are three sacred locations under the Old Testament era, Bethel, Shiloh and Jerusalem. Gen.35:1-7

I. OTHER DESIGNATIONS FOR TEMPLE IN THE BIBLE

The word temple" is generally used in the scripture for the sacred house erected on the summit of Mount Moriah for the worship of God. It is called "the temple" (1Kgs.6:17); house of the Lord (2Chron.23:5,12) your holy temple (Ps.79:1); the house of the God of Jacob (Isa.2:3); the house of my glory (Isa.60:7); a house of prayer (Isa.56:7, Matt.21:13); a house of sacrifice (2Chron.7:12), the house of their sanctuary (2Chron.36:17); our holy and beautiful house (Isa.64:11); the holy mount (Isa.27:13); the palace for the Lord God (1Chro.29:1); the Tabernacle of witness (2Chron.24:6); Zion (Ps.74:2, 84:7) Christ calls it my father's house (Jhn.2:16).

II. TWO KINDS OF TEMPLE:

1. **The Old Testament Temple:-** This is a physical sacred building for the service of God; first built by Moses as a Tabernacle. Exs.38:21; 39:42-43, 40:16-38.

Before the Israelites reached the promised land, God had first instructed Moses while in the wilderness to construct a tabernacle (i.e a moving tent from place to place) that God might dwell in their midst, Exs.25:8-9. Divine patterns and specific measurements were shown or given to Moses and he was strictly warned to follow the divinely revealed patterns, which he did and Moses was counted faithful by God Exs.22:40, 39:22, Heb.3:5. But God had already told the Israelites that there shall be a particular location where His name shall be placed when they might have settled in the promised land, there they shall come to worship Him and to present all their offerings and sacrifices, Tithing's, vows, etc Deu.12:5-14.

After their settlement on the Promised Land, God chose Jerusalem as a place where all His worship ordinances must be observed: 2 Chron.6:6 King David had desired earlier to build a beautiful temple for God (i.e the one that is better than the movable tent where the Ark of Covenant was placed) 2Sam.7:1-17.

But God chose Solomon his son to be the builder, though the prophecy here is fore-shadowing the True Tabernacle or Temple, which the Messiah (Christ) shall later build as He is a descent of the royal family of King David. And similar prophecies concerning this was re-affirmed by the Angel Gabriel at the conception of Christ Lk.1:30-33. The Spiritual temple is the church which was built by Christ .Matt.16:18.

2. **The New Testament Temple: -** This is the spiritual habitation of God's Spirit in a believer or in an assembly of the called-out people (the church). Eph.2:19-22, 1Cor.3:16, 6:19; 2Cor.6:16-18. Therefore, the Church of Christ is the True Tabernacle and that spiritual Temple

which the Lord erected and not men. Heb.8:1-5. It is beyond the work of human hands, God dwells not in the temples made with human hands, Isa.66:1-2, Acts.7:44-50. This church is built according to divine pattern (i.e the teachings of Christ) Eph.3:10-18. 2Jhn.1:9-11, Jhn.12:49-50, 1Cor.1:29-31.

III. COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TEMPLE

OLD TEMPLE		THE NEW TESTAMENT TEMPLE	
1.	It is a physical temple Heb.9:1-10	1.	It is a spiritual temple Each Christian is a building block (stone). Eph.2:19-22, 1Pet.2:5
2.	Pitched and erected by men	2.	Pitched by the Lord Himself. Heb.8:2
3.	It was meant for Israelite nation only	3.	It accommodates all nations on the earth Isa.2:3, Acts.1:8
4.	Aaron and his sons are the High priests; All Levites are serving priests Num.18:1-21	4.	Christ alone from the tribe of Judah is our High-priest Heb.7:11-13. All Christians are the serving priests under Christ. 1Pet.2:9
5.	It was destructible and rebuilt three times (By King Solomon, By Zerubbabel and by king Herod. This temple ceased from existence since AD70	5.	It is an indestructible temple; The church stands forever. Dan.2:44-45, Matt.16:18
6.	Carnal ordinances or fleshly commandments are involved Heb.9:1-10	6.	It appeals to our spiritual nature; it purifies our consciences Heb.9:11-14
7.	Animal sacrifices on the altar are authorized	7.	Christ offered Himself once for all times Heb.10:10-14. Christians are to offer their bodies unto God Rm.12:1-2, 1Pet.2:5
8.	Its site location was at Jerusalem 2Chron.6:6, 1Kgs.12:27.	8.	The spiritual temple also started from Jerusalem and it must reach the whole earth. Lk.24:47, Acts.1:8, 4:47, Isa.2:3.
9.	It is the only place for an acceptable worship Deut.12:5-14;16:16	9.	God is spirit Jhn.4:23-24, Isa.2:3. The church of Christ is the only divine assembly chosen for acceptable worship Rom.16:16-18.

10.	Moses received divine measurements for the design of the Tabernacle likewise King Solomon received the patterns for the Temple from his father, David. Exs.25:8,9, Exs.25:8-9, 38:21;38:21; 39:32-43; 40:17, 1Chron.28:10-12. 29:38	10.	Christ also received the pattern of His doctrines and of His church from the Father. These pattern for the New Testament church is clearly written by the Apostles Jhn.12:49-50, 2Jhn.1:9-11, Phil.3:16-19.
11.	King Jeroboam established two fake temples for the sake of His political influence. He ordained fake feast days and fake priests to prevent the Israelite from going down to the one True temple at Jerusalem. 1Kgs.12:20,26-33, 14:7-14. 13:33-34	11.	False prophets have established fake churches for their followers; They ordained fake feast days, fake offices, and fake doctrines just like king Jeroboam, they are under God's curse, Gal.1:6-9; 2Pet.2:1-3,14; Rev.22:18-19. Thus, they prevent the people from becoming a member of the True Temple, the Church of Christ. Matt.16:18, 1Pet.2:5

6:3-5.

- ii. Weekly money contributions on the first day of the week without tithing or levying 1Cor.16:1-2, 2Cor.9:6-8
- iii. Weekly observance of the Lord's Supper using unleavened bread and the fruit of vine Lk.22:19, Acts.20:7 1Cor.11:23-26
- iv. Praying with one accord, without cursing of enemies, nor making vain repetitions. Acts.4:24-29, Matt.5:44;6:7-8
- v. Singing the spiritual songs without musical instruments, dancing, clapping etc. Eph.5:19, Col3:16, Heb.13:15
- vi. The purpose of the Temple of God today is to offer an acceptable spiritual sacrifices to God through holy living, 1Pet.2:1-9; Rom.12:1-2

NOTE:- The act of applying Mosaic laws or old testament instructions in your worship today puts you under a divine curse Gal 5:4. To apply one law is to apply all! Deut.27:26, Gal.2:16, 21; 3:10-11; 5:1-4. We may learn from the Old Testament writings but we cannot apply it in our worship anymore. Rom.15:4; Heb.8:6-13

6. The name of the New Testament temple is **the Church of Christ**; you cannot change that! Rom.16:16; Heb.12:23. Thus, with all the above identity marks as they are confirmed in the scriptures, there is no denominational church (i.e churches founded by men) on earth today that is qualified to be called the Temple of God! 1Pet.4:11; Rev.22:18-19. They have forsaken the teachings of Christ so Christ shall deny them on the last days Matt.7:21-23. Therefore, God is calling you to come out from among them, and be separate says, the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean. And I will receive you. 2Cor.6:17
Come out from denominational system today!

V. THE IDENTITY OF THE TEMPLE OF GOD TODAY

We can identify the temple of God today through all those marks of identify for the New Testament church. Those identify marks are the divine measurements for this temple of Christ, some of which are as follow;

1. The Builder is Christ. There cannot be laid any other foundation. Matt.16:18, 1Cor.3:11.
2. The origin of this temple must be from the city of Jerusalem to the ends of the earth; Zech.1:16, Isa.2:3, Acts.1:8
3. The organizational structure of this temple is such that Christ is the only universal Head or the High-priest over this church, Eph.5:23, Heb.3:1. While the plurality of elders oversee a local church independently with the Deacons serving along with them. Act.14:23; 20:17,28; Phil.1:1, 1Tim.3:1-13.
4. All leadership roles are performed by men in worship and decision-making activities, women are to refrain from such roles. 1Cor.14:34-37, 1Tim.2:11-15.
5. The five items of worship are observed according to the New Testament pattern (Acts.2:42,47);
1. Upholding the Apostolic doctrines, Gal.1:6-9, 1Tim.1:3;

IN CONCLUSION, Having studied the origin of God's temple, its identity marks and the purpose of the temple, do you know that it is dangerous for your soul to stay outside this temple of God? Do you know that to live on earth without the indwelling of the spirit of God makes man to be as good as a living corpse? Do you also know that to observe worship in the churches of men makes your efforts vain? God is merciful and gracious, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Repent and be baptized by water immersion into the doctrine of Christ today for the remission of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts.2:38). Then you shall become a living stone; a holy habitation for the Spirit of God; a royal priesthood to God and you will be qualified to offer acceptable sacrifices unto God! 1Pet.2:1-9. **Obey today and do not delay.**

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