

THE NAME OF THE CHURCH - "CHURCH OF GOD"

Sermonette by Robert Schmid

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Brethren there is something that every one of you, every man, woman and child in this room has, no exception, and that is a NAME. Yes, every one of you has a name. And think about it, but that name was probably given to you before you were born. That means that long before you saw daylight your parents visualized what you will look like, anticipated whether you will be a boy or girl, and planned for you to have a name. Once you were born and you received your name, you would be known by it for the rest of your life.

A name, what's in a name anyhow? Why is a name important?

The dictionary states that a name is a word or phrase that constitutes the distinctive designation of a person or thing. So, your name identifies you, it says something about you, says something about your reputation and your character. It is used to identify a family or clan. When you hear a name it immediately evokes an image, a picture in your mind, a judgment, which classifies the person, family or thing into good or bad, right or wrong, pleasing or hurtful, and so on.

With this in mind as an introduction, the name I want to talk to you about is the name of THE CHURCH.

Now, when you got up this morning you probably said, "let's go to church," but what you really meant to say was, and everybody knew it, is, "let's go to the Worldwide Church of God", right! So the name of the church you attend is the Worldwide Church of God and by this name you identify what church you mean, in contrast to any of the other names that have been given to churches.

Now, as most of you know, the name "Worldwide Church of God" is strictly a legal name, a legal necessity. It's a corporate name. What that means is that we must differentiate between the name "Worldwide Church of God" and the name "Church of God" spoken of in the Bible. I am sure you all realize that the name "Worldwide Church of God" is NOT mentioned in the Bible.

Mr. Tkach in the April 26, 1994 Pastor General's Report (also reprinted in the Worldwide News of May 17, 1994) explained that, "--- the true Church of God is not limited to any corporate entity nor any human organization." "The true Church of God, (he wrote), consists of all converted people, all people who have the Holy Spirit" (Rom 8).

The incorporated organization, that is the Worldwide Church of God, is a tool to help do the job of preaching and teaching and making disciples. In other words, we - you and I - are the true Church of God, not the organization we attend, known as the Worldwide Church of God. The name "Church of God" identifies the true Church meaning all those who have God's Holy Spirit.

When we talk about the church we need to be specific. Are we talking about the "Church of God" or are we talking about the "Roman Catholic Church," the "Lutheran Church," the "Baptist

Church" and hundreds of other churches that exist by every imaginable name. All these (other) churches are human organizations. The TRUE "Church of God," and there is only ONE, is a spiritual organization. It is a spiritual body, the Body of Christ.

Let me quote from Mr. Tkach's letter where he asked the question:

"Are all churches the churches of God?" "The question itself is misleading (he said) The Church of God, and there is only one, is not a human organization. It is a spiritual Body, the Body of Christ. As explained above, the true Church of God is not limited to any humanly incorporated organization. God works where he pleases, and all converted people everywhere make up the true Church of God. It is not correct to say that any particular church organization, including ours, is, of and by itself, the true Church. The true Church includes all the true Christians in the organization, not the organization itself. The converted people are the Church. That is what the Bible teaches, and it is also what Mr. Armstrong taught" (end quote).

So, now let's look in the Bible - the Word of God, if the name "Church of God" is scriptural and if it is the only Church mentioned in the Bible or not.

In Matt. 16:18 Jesus Christ said: "*I will build MY church...*" and He called HIS church the **Church of God**.

The name Church of God is mentioned 12 times in the New Testament, and 12 is of course God's complete number for organizational beginnings.

In Acts 20:28 Paul admonished the Ephesians Elders: to feed, and to take care of what Church? The **Church of God**.

In I Cor. 10:32 Paul says: "*Give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the **Church of God**.*" (notice the 3 distinct entities of people in the world. Jews, Gentiles and Christians).

In I. Cor. 11:22 Paul, speaking about the new Passover, asks the Corinthians if they "*despise the **Church of God**.*" (yes, there are people who despise the Church of God!).

In I. Cor. 15:9 Paul says: "*Because I persecuted the **Church of God***", and he repeats himself in Gal 1:13 where he said; "*Beyond measure I persecuted the **Church of God***" (so, at one time Paul persecuted the Church of God, only to become its greatest spokesman later on. You just never know!).

I Cor. 1:2 and II Cor. 1:1 speaks of the "*Church of God at Corinth*" (in other words there are Churches of God in many locations).

Timothy in I Tim 3:5 says: "*For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the **Church of God***" (yes, we all have a responsibility to take care of the Church of God).

The rest of the references to the Church of God are in I Tim. 3:15, I Cor. 11:16, I Thess. 2:14 and the last one II Thess. 1:4.

So the name **Church of God** clearly identifies whose church we are talking about. We are talking about **God's Church**.

However, the Bible speaks not only of the one church, the Church of God, it also speaks of another church; Let me explain.

As most of you know God uses a woman as the symbol for a church.

This becomes clear when we read II Cor.11:3, Rev. 19:7-9 and Rev. 12:1 where John in vision saw this church and describes here as follows: *"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars."* Here is described the TRUE Church of God, clothed with the sun, expelling all darkness, in fact the moon is under her feet picturing that the ruler of night and darkness was subdued and is under subjection, while her crown of twelve stars symbolized the twelve apostles - the whole house of Israel, the whole Family of God.

Then in Rev. 17:1-5 we are introduced to a second woman, or church that John saw. And the angel said to John, *"Come here; I will show you the judgment of the great whore (there is the other woman) that sits upon many watersAnd I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast full of the names of blasphemy and the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones ... and upon her forehead was a NAME written (remember everybody has a name): **Mystery, Babylon the Great, The Mother of Harlots...** and I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."*

This is obviously another church, a FALSE church, drunk with the blood of the saints. John continues in verse 15: *"The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sits, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations and tongues."* This fallen woman, this false church rules over the whole world.

Note the clean and clear contrast between the two churches:

One held the moon under her feet; the other was seated upon the beast.

One possessed the crown of twelve stars; the other wearing the inscription: **Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots**.

One was driven into the wilderness and nourished by God; the other ruled the world, drunk on the blood of the saints and martyrs.

The Word of God leaves no doubt that there are two churches described in scripture, not many, and one of the signs (not the only one), but one of the signs of the true church is that it's name must identify its owner which is **God and Jesus Christ**, in other words the name of the TRUE church is **Church of God**.

Well, as we can see, names are very important. And so, this morning when you got up you said:

"Let's go to church" but what you really meant to say was "lets go to the Church of who? Ah, let's go to the **Church of God**" and that's where you are. That's were you are brethren!

Look around you, God's Church sits next to you; God's Church sits in front of you and in back of you. You see, Jesus Christ made it very plain when He said: *"For where two or three are gathered in MY NAME, there am I in the midst of them."* **So, have a happy Sabbath with Jesus Christ and His Body, the Church of God.**