

National Sovereignty & Border Control

Just as any nation would suffer chaos that had weak or no laws concerning immigration and the establishment of borders; so it is with the religious world that does not rely on the source that defines the boundaries in what it means to be “in Christ” as a citizen of His kingdom (*the church*) and one day a glorified citizen of “holy city new Jerusalem” (*Rev 21*). Notice what Paul said about boundaries where it concerns this present physical realm.

Act 17:26 And (*God*) hath made of **one blood all nations** of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and **the bounds** (*Gk.3734- boundary line*) **of their habitation**; (*emp. added*)

Even though all people came from Adam and Eve as “one blood”, God has set, from eternity, the boundaries of the world wherein each is to be maintained. (*Pro 22:28- Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.*) He has always had a purpose in mind for everything He did and will do (*Ex 9:16- concerning Pharaoh*). Besides boundaries, laws also have purpose, namely those that comply with the ordinances of God. But there were so many ‘pioneers’ of the faith in the early days of the church in this country who believed we were not to give any allegiance to any nation to the point of not participating in national sovereignty or in the election process. Also at that time there were many who did not believe that the church and kingdom of Dan 2:44 were one and the same. How, if we aren’t supposed to take part in determining the laws that control us, could we vote then for at least a moral representation?

Rom 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. 5 Wherefore **ye must needs be subject**, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. (*emp. added*)

Every nation has its purpose, no matter what its political makeup (*democracy, republic, monarchy, socialist dictatorship*) but all nations will end up in the trash heap of history that turn their backs on their Creator.

Jer 18:7 If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, 8 and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.

In other words, God bases His judgment on whether a nation changes its course from evil to do what’s right, as He did with Nineveh (*Jonah 3:9-10*).

God’s threatenings are conditional, “unless they repent,” as are His promises, “if they endure to the end”. Albert Barnes

So, as it concerns the spiritual realm, we understand that there is only one path by which man can enter the gates of Heaven.

Joh 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

If any who are not of “the Israel of God” (*Gal 6:16- i.e., the kingdom/church*), in order to become part of her, they must do as the Israelites were commanded, that those strangers who wished to become part of her, who wished to partake of the Passover meal, were to **assimilate** into the Law of Moses, i.e., all the males were to be circumcised.

Exo 12:48 And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the LORD, let **all his males be circumcised**, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be **as one that is born in the land**: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. 49 **One law** shall be to him that is **homeborn**, and unto the **stranger that sojourneth among you**. 50 Thus did all the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they. (*emp. added*)

The same thing goes for anyone who wishes to become part of **spiritual** Israel, the church.

Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly (*spiritual*); and **circumcision is that of the heart** (*Gk.2588- thoughts or feelings [mind]*), in the spirit (*Gk.4151- mental disposition*), and not in the letter (*Law of Moses*); whose praise is not of men, but of God. (*emp. added*)

Those not separated from the world (*1 Cor 15:31- I die daily.*) or any doctrine that is contrary to the “doctrine of Christ” cannot be a citizen of the nation we call spiritual Israel. Neither are we to just accept as brethren, those of the denominations.

2Jn 1:9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth **not** in the **doctrine of Christ**, hath not God. He that abideth **in** the **doctrine of Christ**, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, **neither bid him God speed**: 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (*emp. added*)

“Have no religious connection with him, nor act towards him so as to induce others to believe you acknowledge him as a brother.” Adam Clarke

We are coming into the season where we will be seeing certain persons manning those all too familiar “kettles” in front of places like Walmart. Do we participate (*or are we intimidated into participating*) in denominational charities, such as the Salvation Army or New Hope Ministries, by giving to them just because they claim to “do the most good”? Will their doing good purchase for them (*or us*) a place prepared by Christ in Heaven (*Jn 14:2-3*)?

2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

So then, what determines fellowship that is acceptable?

Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon (*Gk.1941- to invoke [for aid]*) Him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

This “calling” has been misconstrued as a verbal plea (“*Lord Jesus come into my heart*”), and not as it actually is, obedience to the ordinance of baptism which washes away sin and gives us the ability to stand before God with a “good conscience”. The phrase stands, then, as a synecdoche (*one piece of the pie representing the contents of the whole pie*).

1Pe 3:21 The like figure (*the flood that separated Noah and his family from the sin-filled world of his day*) whereunto *even* baptism (*a synonymous form of water that separates the sinner from his sins*) doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh [*as in Lev 16:4*], but the **answer of a good conscience** toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: (*emp. added*)

This “answer of a good conscience” pertains to the “calling on the name of the Lord”. The ordinance of baptism correlates with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (*Rom 6:2-3*) and thus puts us in fellowship with Him by emulating that process. If He never would have died, been buried and raised on the third day, none of this would have been possible. This is what puts us inside the border of the nation of spiritual Israel.

Reading the book titled “Reviving The Ancient Faith, The Story of Churches of Christ in America”, the writer, Richard T. Hughes, “Distinguished Professor of Religion at Pepperdine University”, seems to make the assumption that the teachings of the early pioneers of the churches of Christ in America set the standard of doctrine for what the “Churches of Christ” believe today, and not as being based on planting the seed by which the church originated (*Lk 8:11*). He often berates the idea of a return to the “ancient order” or the “primitive church” as something to be frowned on, along with the simple “backwoods” preaching style of Moses E. Lard or the stance that Tolbert Fanning took against instrumental music and missionary societies. He states that Alexander “Campbell viewed the kingdom of God as a constitutional monarchy in the here and now and, for all practical purposes, equated the kingdom with the church”. Did the writer not even consider the correlation between Acts 2:47/Col 1:13? He often employed a capital “C” for “churches” as if restoring the primitive body of Christ is to be placing it in the denominational column and not, as she so truly is, the **pre**-denominational church that Jesus purchased with His blood (*Heb 20:28*) and which is based upon His being the Messiah.

Mat 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and **upon this rock** (*i.e., Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ*) I will build My church; and the gates of hell (*Hades*) shall not prevail against it. (*emp. added*)

If Jesus wasn’t the prophesied Messiah the church/kingdom would have no foundation. Every nation has a foundation and is based on its own laws by which it is governed. If what Jesus said in John 12:48, where He said His word would be the final judge, if that isn’t the standard by which we judge doctrinal truth (*along with the border of the kingdom*) how can we know for

certain that what we believe is according to the will of God to save mankind?

1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

To attribute our acts of worship, the means by which one enters the church, her organization, authority, music and other distinctive marks that separate her from the denominational world that surrounds her, to these early American pioneers, is to separate from the holy Writ its inspiration and hand such doctrines over to the credit of mere mortals. “The seed is the word of God” (*Lk 8:11*) and if we plant **that** seed we will harvest the fruit of it and not a denominational crop. And to apologize for those doctrines that make such a distinction between truth and error is to lead a soul away from the truth and condemn them to eternal misery.

Owen Olbricht wrote an article for *The Gospel Gleaner* entitled “Non-Denominational or Pre-Denominational” in which he states some of the following:

In recent years churches that accept people of all creeds call themselves non-denominational because they no longer embrace a specific denominational creed but accept people of all creeds. They open their doors to almost all people with differing beliefs who do not want to be identified with any denomination.

For this reason the term “non-denominational” does not identify churches of Christ as being different than these groups and thus does not best communicate our goal.

Denominational practices began when churches began to be led away from Christ by men, even as Paul warned the Ephesus elders that such would happen (*Acts 20:28-31*). One bishop began to take control of one congregation, then a number of congregations, and finally all congregations fell under the umbrella of one leading bishop, known as the father bishop, the pope.

Many denominations came into existence after the ‘reformation’ movement led by such men as Luther, Calvin, Wesley and Smith. Owen went on:

The goal of the churches of Christ is to follow Jesus’ teaching, which preceded the teaching that has created the many denominations of today. In order to do this, we accept only the teaching that predates the teaching of denominations.

In order to communicate this effort, we should express it by letting the world know that we are not simply non-denominational but pre-denominational. Since non-denominational has come to mean an amalgamation of doctrinal beliefs, the term pre-denominational might better communicate our plea to return to the simple New Testament teaching of Jesus.

But now some might state that Paul taught that all the denominations make up the body of Christ as “many members, yet but one body”. To which denominations did he refer since none existed at the time of his writing?

1Co 12:20 But **now** are they (*individual Christians*) many members, yet but one body. (*emp. added*)

1Co 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

The Nation of Spiritual Israel; the Church

1Pe 2:9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an **holy nation**, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: 10 Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (*emp. added*)

As a map indicates the borders of nations, the kingdom's border is the Bible and the door of entry is through Christ. To attempt to enter another way, when there is only one, as Jesus stated (*Jn 14:6*), that person would be a thief and a robber (*or, an "illegal alien"*).

Joh 10:1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth **not by the door** into the sheepfold, but climbeth up **some other way**, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. 4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: **for they know his voice**. (*emp. added*)

Man-made attempts to be the church that Jesus gave His blood for is creating a group that is unknown to Him (*Mat 7:23*) and thus a denomination. Folks of these denominations cannot say that they hear the voice of our Lord speaking to them from the very pages that speak truth.

Eph 4:4 There is **one** body (*the church [not black church or white church]- 1 Cor 12:27... "body ...members in particular"*) and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord (*Jesus Christ*), one faith (*reliance upon Christ to save- Act 4:12*), one baptism (*immersion for remission- Act 19:4-5*), 6 one God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all. (*emp. added*)

Well known singer/entertainer Pat Boone was withdrawn from by the churches of Christ when he was convinced he received Holy Spirit baptism and began speaking in tongues and believed that present day miraculous healings existed.

Strait is the Gate

Mat 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait (*Gk.4728- narrow*) gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there-at: 14 Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Using this passage to make the point that the church, as Jesus explained it, is made up of such a small number compared to the denominations, some will dare to label you as "narrow minded"; but only if we aren't explaining such out of love for their soul.

Eph 4:14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with **every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness**, whereby they **lie in wait to deceive**; 15 But **speaking the truth in love**, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, *even Christ*: (*emp. added*)

The pains in which many have undertaken to preserve the ancient order, the primitive church, have brought on themselves an abundance of criticism from those who are content in their human philosophical ideologies of things that pertain to the spiritual. The Greek gloss used for “spirit” in the following verses is “vital principal”, a.k.a., a crucial standard.

1Co 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit (*Gk.4151- vital principle [crucial standard]*) of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Pro 23:23 Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

In Matthew 10 Jesus gave His disciples certain powers adding “freely ye have received, freely give” (*v. 8*). Spiritual truth is something we are to acquire, hold on to and guard with all that we have. But it is also something that is constant and which we are to freely give just as Elijah encouraged the widow of Zarephath when her “barrel of meal wasted not, and neither did the cruise of oil fail, **according to the word of the Lord**” (*1 Kin 17:16- emp. added*). Therefore, the truth, “according to the word of the Lord” will never die but must continue to be taught.

The Bible, as the inspired word of God, then is our border. It is our GPS (*God's Plan of Salvation*). Using a man-made map to direct us into the kingdom (*church*) is trusting in a mere mortal to lead us to the heavenly shores and is not standing firm on the reliance in Jesus to save.

Of all New Testament personalities that spoke of Hell, Jesus alluded to it most. Why? He spoke of it as a warning out of His love for His creation. So if we aren't warning those lost in sin of the consequence of such a place then we can't truly say that we love them. This is why we must “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh [us] for a reason of the hope that is in [us] with meekness and fear” (*1 Pet 3:15*).

1Co 3:18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. 20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

As Paul asked, we ought to us the same question when proclaiming the truth where it offends:

Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? (*Gal 4:16*)

1Jn 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.