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HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT CHURCH

By Mark Roberts

The purpose of this little tract is to present what the Bible says on the subject of differing churches. You will not find quotes from men's creed books or the opinions of well-schooled theologians and scholars here. Instead what God has to say about this matter will be clearly presented by His word, and by His word only. If you will take your own Bible and follow along as you read this material you will be able to easily understand what the Bible teaches. Isn't that what really matters -- what the Bible says?

There are so many different churches in our community, all claiming to be teaching and practicing what is right that it is very difficult to decide where one ought to go each Sunday. Is it possible for all these varying churches to be right? Does God care which church one attends? What about "going to the church of your choice?"

Let's begin by understanding that the Bible condemns dividing up into various churches or denominations. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Jesus prayed that His disciples would be united, not fragmented into hundreds of different religious groups (John 17:21). Denominational division is not God's plan!

The Bible teaches that there is only supposed to be one church, Jesus' church. Christ claimed that He would build His church (Matthew 16:18), and this is the church that the Bible recognizes. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). How many churches does the Bible say there should be? Just as many churches as there is faiths, hopes, or Gods! Since there is "one hope... one Lord, one faith" we can easily understand how many bodies there are: ONE (just as verse 4 so states). The body of Christ is the church (compare Ephesians 4:4 and Ephesians 1:22-23), and there is only one body. So, all this "go to the church of your choice" business falls by the wayside when we see that the Bible is teaching us to go the church of Jesus' choice! How do we identify that church?

First, Jesus' church will respect His Headship. Christ is the head of His church (Ephesians 1:22-23). There is simply nothing stated in the Bible about anyone else assuming that rule, on heaven or on earth. Jesus has all authority (Matthew 28:18), and is therefore the absolute head of His Body, the church.

Secondly, Jesus' church will respect His authority. Authority is the right to rule, or command. A church that is truly the Lord's will recognize His absolute right to rule because He is the head of the church. This means that Jesus' church will do what He orders or tells them to do, rather than doing what men want to do. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17). Christ's church will obey Him!

Thirdly, Jesus' church will obey His Word, the Bible. The Bible is the revealed Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and as such instructs us in all that we should do to please the Lord (2 Peter 1:3). When men substitute their creed books, decrees, and institutes for what the Bible says they are showing disrespect for the Head of the church and not pleasing Him. How can we be "doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus" if He has not instructed us to do a thing? All such additions and subtractions to the Bible are expressly condemned in Galatians 1:8-9.

Many churches claim Jesus as their Head (though some denominations have emerged with human heads over them), and still others even claim to respect His authority and obey the Bible. The "acid test" is to see if a church is teaching what Jesus taught about salvation.

Jesus' church will teach what Christ taught about salvation. In Mark 16:16 Jesus Himself said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Far too many churches want to say "He that believeth shall be saved" but that is not what the Lord said. Obviously, a lack of belief alone is enough to cause one to be lost (if one doesn't believe he will never want to be baptized), but both belief and baptism are necessary to be saved, according to Jesus' own words. Jesus' church will teach the truth about salvation.

You have used your own Bible to see what Christ's church will believe and practice. Continue your studying in the New Testament to find out more about what Jesus wants His church to be like. Can we help you in that search?

--Mark Roberts

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