

THE ONE TRUE CHURCH

There are many different denominations (man-made churches)! All have different founders. All began at different times and places. Each wears a name different from the others. Each worships in its own way. Denominations differ from one another in organization. They teach different doctrines. They teach different ways to be saved.

It is strange that those who claim to believe the Bible will accept such confusion. Millions never question it. Others excuse it saying: "We are all going to Heaven. We are just going by different roads." Some say: "One church is as good as another." Still others tell us to "Join the church of your choice."

Does God have a choice? Is there a church revealed in the Bible? If Jesus established a church, should not we be in it instead of one started by a man? What does the Bible say?

The Bible Condemns Division

Jesus prayed that all who believe in Him would be one (John 17:20-23). Paul rebuked the church at Corinth for being divided: "***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***" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Christians are commanded to mark those who cause division by teaching a different doctrine (Romans 16:16,17).

Only One Church

Jesus promised: "***Upon this rock, I will build My church***" (Matthew 16:18). He did not promise to build many denominations! He promised to build His church! He died for His church (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25). No where does the Bible say Jesus built a denomination! Nor does the Bible teach Jesus died for any church established by man! He died for only one church, the one He bought with His own blood.

The church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). There is one body (Ephesians 4:4). Therefore, there is but one church! Jesus is the Saviour of His body (Ephesians 5:25). If we want to be saved, we must be in His body. We cannot be saved in a man-made church!

The Church Began in Jerusalem in AD 33

Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). The prophets foretold the church would be built in "***the last days***" in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2,3; Joel 2:28-32). Jesus told His apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8). The Spirit came upon them on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13). Peter said this was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:16-21). He preached the Gospel to the people. When they heard, believed, repented and were baptized, they were added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:22-47). All today who obey the same Gospel in the same way are added by the same Lord to the same church!

Jesus is the Head

"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

We do not read in the Bible of any human head of the church. There is no preacher,

pastor, priest, pope, president, patriarch, board, or committee over the one true church. Christ is its only head! The headquarters of the one true church is in Heaven where Jesus Christ, the head, is (Acts 2:33-36).

Congregations are Independent

While there is one body, the Christians in each area meet together to worship. Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome: ***“The churches of Christ greet you”*** (Romans 16:16). He was not speaking of different denominations, but of the assemblies of Christians in each area. These together make up the body of Christ. Paul addressed the saints in Corinth as ***“the church of God which is at Corinth”*** (1 Corinthians 1:2). He asked the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet with him in Miletus (Acts 20:17). He spoke of ***“the churches of Galatia”*** meaning the assemblies of Christians in each city of Galatia (Galatians 1:2).

Except for Christ who rules from Heaven, there is no central organization of the one, true church. Each congregation is self-governing and independent of all the others. Each has its own elders who are also called bishops (overseers) and pastors (shepherds). The church at Antioch sent a contribution to the elders of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:29,30). Paul and Barnabas ***“appointed elders in every church”*** (Acts 14:23). Paul called the elders of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17). He wrote to the saints in Philippi ***“with the bishops and deacons”*** (Philippians 1:1). Elders are only over the local congregation of which they are members (1 Peter 5:1,2).

There is a Pattern of Worship

The church in the Bible met on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2). They worshipped in ***“spirit and in truth”*** (John 4:24). They ate the Lord’s supper (Matthew 26:26-29; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). They sang praises to God without the aid of man-made musical instruments (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 13:15). They offered up prayers to God through Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:1-8). They heard the preaching of God’s Word (Acts 2:42; 20:7 ; Matthew 28:20). They gave as God had prospered them (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

Names of the Church and its Members

Denominations often wear the names of their founders. Sometimes they wear the name of a doctrine. Others wear the name of the place where they began. The church in the Bible honors God by its name. It is called ***“the church of God”*** (1 Corinthians 1:2) and ***“the church of Christ”*** (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16). Members are called ***“disciples”*** because they are learners of Jesus (Acts 6:1). They are called ***“saints”*** because they are set apart from the world (1 Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1). They are called ***“children of God”*** because they have been born again into His family (John 3:3-5; 1 John 3:1). Sometimes they are called ***“believers”*** because they trust in Jesus Christ to save them (Acts 5:14; John 8:24). They are ***“members”*** because of their relationship with one another in the body (1 Corinthians 12:27). Members of the church of the Bible are also called ***“Christians.”*** Isaiah the prophet foretold God would give this new name to His people (Isaiah 62:2; Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).

Entering the One True Church

One enters the one true church by obeying the Gospel (Romans 6:16-18; 1 Peter 1:22,23). This obedience includes hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17), believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Mark 16:16), repenting of one’s sins

(Acts 2:38), confessing Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:37), and being buried in baptism for the remission of sins (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27). When one obeys these commands, the Lord adds him to His church (Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

Denominations have no right to exist. They will be destroyed by the Lord at His coming (Matthew 15:13). Only the church established by Jesus Christ will be saved (Ephesians 5:23-27). Do not risk your salvation in a man-made church. Obey the Gospel and the Lord will add you to His church!