

THE ONE CHURCH

Just a quick look through the Yellow Pages will demonstrate that there are dozens of different churches in our immediate area. Not just congregations, but actually different organizations whose religious practices may be radically different from one another and from the Bible. What does the Scripture say about all these denominations? Is God pleased? We think not.

Matthew 16:18 records Jesus' promise to build a single church which would stand the test of time and prevail against Satan and his minions. Later, after years of preaching and teaching, Paul would tell the Ephesians that there was only "one body" (Ephesians 4: 4) and "one faith" (Ephesians 4: 5). Paul also says that the body and the church were the same thing (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23). Therefore, it is accurate to say that there is but one true church. There are many individual, local congregations of the same church, but they all must be part of that one true church to which all penitent, obedient believers belong. That would be the same church to which God added believers at Pentecost (Acts 2: 47). Any church other than the one Jesus owns, is an imposter. One must absolutely be part of Jesus' church and no other.

Would anyone seriously suggest that God is pleased with the divisions present within the religious world? Certainly, they would not. The Bible teaches that God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33) and that he expects unity among those who profess to follow him (Ephesians 4:3, 13). Does confusion exist in the religious world? Yes! Does unity exist in the religious world? No! So, we ask, is God pleased? No! Those who have divided the church through the ages will be called to answer for their divisiveness (Romans 16:17). The divisions Paul here speaks of are doctrinal divisions. Clearly, we know that there is no common doctrine now existing within the denominational world. Even the very deity of Jesus and the authority of Scripture is questioned by some.

What to do? If God is not pleased with the situation as it now stands, what must we do? How can the religious world meld itself into the one true church that Jesus promised in Matthew 16? Does that church exist today? The good news is that the church that belongs to Christ is in existence today. Remember that Jesus Himself promised that the "gates of Hades would not prevail against" His church (Matthew 16:18). The religious world must immediately renounce and repent of the sin of division, confusion, and broken unity. We call for the immediate elimination of "denominations" which so fracture the unity of God's people. We call for people to stand upon the only common, unchanging ground available: The Word of God.

Those of us who worship in the church of Christ seek to be the one true church. We do so by modeling our lives and worship according to the plan "once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Issues and questions are settled by an appeal to Scripture only and we reject the "commandments of men" (Matthew 15:3, 9; Mark 7:8-13; Colossians 2:8). By bypassing centuries of tradition, commentary, rulings, Conventions, Councils and Synods, and by reaching straight to the Scriptures, we believe the church that Christ died for can be restored today.

Division and denominationalism is wrong. Let us all labor to be a part of that body of believers that Paul spoke of as the "one body." We strive not to be a denomination. We seek only to be the church that belongs to Christ: The church of Christ (Romans 16:16).

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(NEXT WEEK: WHAT SHALL WE CALL THE BODY?)