

## SO JUST WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

The church of Christ is, at its core, simply a gathering of Christians. Jesus declared his intention to build his church (Matthew 16:18) and the Lord added to that church those who were saved (Acts 2:47). It is this same body of believers that we seek to be a part of today. A curious truth seeker might ask, "How can that be done today? Is the church that Jesus built still in operation today? Which church, if any is His church?" These are all valid questions and they deserve truthful answers

**Is the church that Jesus built still in operation today?** Yes, it is! In prophecy, Daniel wrote that a time was coming when a kingdom would be established "*which will never be destroyed*" (Daniel 2:44). That kingdom, according to verse 44, would be established in the days of the Roman kings (c.f. Daniel 2:31-45, esp. 40-45). Back in the passage in Matthew 16 we find Jesus saying of his church that "*the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*" Paul writes to the Ephesians that the Father "*put all things in subjection under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church which is his body...*" (Ephesians 1:22-23). Remember too that it is the church that was paid for by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). We may conclude from these passages, and so many more, that the church was important to Christ and that he would not allow it to pass into obscurity. The question for 21<sup>st</sup> century believers to ask is which church is the church that Jesus died for?

**Which church is His church today?** As one surveys the religious landscape of 2006 it becomes immediately apparent that not all who call themselves a church really are the church Jesus built. The doctrines taught among differing religious groups is often precisely opposed to the doctrines taught by other groups, thus both cannot be right. Division is displeasing to Christ and ought to be vigorously opposed. The Corinthian church showed early signs of denominationalism when Paul rebuked them sternly; "*I exhort you brethren...that there be no divisions among you...*" (1 Corinthians 1:10). He asks the rhetorical question "*Is Christ divided*" (1 Corinthians 1:13). Of course, the answer is "no" and the conclusion is that we ought not to be divided either. Later, Paul would tell the Ephesians that there is only "*one body*" (Ephesians 4:4). Recall that Paul declared earlier that the body of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23), therefore that there is but one church that the seek to be today.

The one Scripture is the teachings given Jesus himself spoke people would wear his name but would not be found acceptable.

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*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 'Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"* (Matthew 7:21-23)

In fact, the Scriptures specifically teach that a time would come when men would not hold the Scriptures in honor but would "*fall away from the faith*" (1 Timothy 4:1). The Bible also teaches that there will be those with a "*form of godliness*" of whom the faithful should avoid (2 Timothy 3:5). Furthermore, we are warned not to tamper with the Scripture for any reasons (Revelation 22:18-19). So with these dire predictions and warnings we ought to be deeply aware of the need to examine the teachings and doctrines taught and compare them to the purity of the Scriptures.

This careful examination and comparison of Scripture is central to the churches of Christ. By faithfully studying and applying the Scriptures, the churches of Christ seek to restore the church that Jesus built. We renounce any doctrine arising from councils, creeds or synods and we cling to the Bible alone as our guide. Every teaching, every doctrine, every practice of the church of Christ is backed by book, chapter and verse.

Our great privilege would be to study with anyone who desires to be part of the body of Christ. Let us stand together upon the foundation of the Bible, reject any innovation foreign to Scripture, and proclaim the good news of pure Christianity to a lost world. Will you join us?

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