

The Church Christ Died For

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There is much confusion about the Lord's church today. Some say, "Join the church of your choice." Others would have you believe that the church is of no consequence at all. What does the Bible say about the church?

The Bible says that Christ promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18). Based upon Peter's confession of Christ as the Son of God, Jesus said, "*I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" Before Acts 2, the church was not in existence, but in Acts 2, we find that the Lord added the saved to the church. Those added to the church were those who had followed His plan to "*repent and be baptized ... for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38, 41, 47). After Acts 2, the church is always spoken of as being in existence, and continues to this day. In studying the New Testament passages concerning the church, we find that the Lord's church:

Wears His Name

Paul said, "*the churches of Christ salute you*" (Rom. 16:16). "*Churches of Christ*" is not a proper name, but a description of the people. The church is a called out congregation of people belonging to Christ. The Lord's church does not wear the name of any man. "Church of God" is used in the Bible, but that makes sense, for Jesus is God (deity) just like the Father. Sometimes we simply find the word "church" used in the Bible. This is logical for there were no other "churches" in the first century except the Lord's church. When someone talked about "the church" in the first century, it was understood of whom they were speaking. Again, when we speak of a "church of Christ" it was not then, nor is it now a proper name; but a description of people who wear Christ's name that have been called out of this world into Christ's kingdom (I Pet. 2:9; Col. 1:13).

Follows His Revealed Word

Many today teach that Christ is still revealing His will to people. This is not true. Jude said that God's word has been "*once for all delivered to the saints*" (Jude 3, NKJV). In fact, there is a warning that "*...if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*" (Gal. 1:9). This tells us just how serious it is to add to what has already been revealed in the Scriptures! The Lord's church follows Christ's revealed word, not "modern" revelations that contradict the plain statements of the Bible.

The Lord's church does not follow the statements and rulings of councils, synods, conventions, etc. Denominations have conventions to decide what they will believe and teach. They then change their creeds in accordance with the rulings. If a more liberal leadership is in place, the teachings will be more liberal; if they have a more conservative leadership in place, their teachings will be more conservative. Friends, where do we find such things taking place in the Bible? The Lord's church, the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16), does not follow councils, synods, and the like, but asks, "*what saith the Scripture?*" (Rom. 4:3). The church for which Christ died speaks as the Bible, and says, "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*" (I Pet. 4:11).

Worships God In Spirit And In Truth

Jesus made it clear that *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (Jn. 4:24). Notice, that Jesus says it is a MUST for people to worship God *“in spirit and in truth.”* If something is a “must”, it means we have no choice but to do it. What does this mean to worship God *“in spirit and in truth”*?

Based on John 4:24, we see that worship to God involves three essential things: 1) The right object (God). 2) The right spirit (Attitude). 3) The right act (The truth). Whether God accepts or rejects our worship depends upon whether or not we worshipped Him *“in spirit”* and *“in truth”*! As Jesus spoke these words to the Samaritan woman, He was saying that true worshippers need to be focused on spiritual matters, not physical (Rom. 14:17). That is why we do not have pie suppers, bingo, car washes, etc.!

The second part has to do with *“truth.”* In order for our worship to be acceptable to God, we must worship in connection with what the Bible says (Jn. 17:17; I Pet. 4:11). We cannot follow the philosophies of man, the creed books of the denominations, and so forth. We must worship God in the way He directs. This has always been what God has expected of His people.

Is A Spiritual Institution

Some have the mistaken notion that the Lord’s church is to solve all the social ills of this world. The church for which Christ died is not a political institution, nor is it an entity for stopping crime, nor supporting various community groups such as the Boy/Girl Scouts, “Meals On Wheels,” Nursery Schools, Ball Teams, etc. The Lord’s church is a spiritual institution purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). This is why we worship God *“in spirit and in truth”* (Jn. 4:24). The Lord’s people, a spiritual people, offer up *“spiritual sacrifices”* to God (I Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15) when we worship. The reason we know the church is a spiritual institution is because the apostle Paul said, *“the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”* (Rom. 14:17).

The Lord’s church is *“the pillar and ground of the truth”* (I Tim. 3:15). She is called the bride of Christ (Rev. 22:17), and the body of Christ (Eph. 4:4), and those who belong to the Lord’s family are to be more concerned about spiritual matters than physical pursuits (Matt. 6:19-21, 33).

Conclusion

Friends, the church for which Christ died is not an earthly entity. She is unlike anything this world has seen, for she is a spiritual body with a spiritual work upon this earth. Let us respect the Lord’s plan for His church and be members of it while we still have time. We can be a part of the Lord’s church when we obey the Lord’s plan for salvation (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38, 47).