

Is There Really Only One Church?



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

Is There Really Only One Church?

Learn from some evidence for the existence of only one church and consider what you should do with this knowledge

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Study Number: DGW147

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Is There Really Only One Church?

Is there really only one church that belongs to God? This is a question that must be answered by those who are seeking to be part of the church that does belong to God. If there are many different churches, then an individual could join the church of his/her own choice – according to whatever he/she desires in a church. But, if there is only one true church that belongs to God, then those who desire to be saved must do everything he/she can do to be part of that church.

Today, there is a great deal of confusion that exists concerning the church. This confusion exists because there are tens of thousands of different religious organizations that all profess to be (or at least be part of) the church that belongs to God. There are Catholic Churches, Greek Orthodox Churches, Presbyterian Churches, Baptist Churches, Methodist Churches, Lutheran Churches, Nazarene Churches, Pentecostal Churches, Seventh-Day Adventist Churches, Christian Churches, non-denominational churches, and many, many, many others.

Now, you should spend a moment considering the fact that every one of these churches differ from the others in some point of doctrinal belief or practice. So, they simply do not all teach, believe, and practice the same things. They are, therefore, not in true unity with one another. If they were, then there would be no need for the different churches to exist!

As people look to join a church today, it has become very difficult (in many cases) to sort through all of these differences and find the “right” one. Because there is not just one church that exists in the world today, mankind has devised his own ways of choosing a church to join. Some of the popular methods for choosing a church to join are: Joining a church that your family or friends attend, joining a church that has a dynamic and/or entertaining preacher, joining a church that doesn’t expect or require too much of its members, joining a church that is not too strict, joining a church that is close to your house, joining a church that offers a lot of social and entertaining programs for its members (i.e. especially for the young people), joining a church because it worships the way that you want to worship, etc.

However, there is a problem with all of these common methods for joining a church. They are all focused on YOU. However, your focus in joining a church should not be based on what *you* want or what is most enjoyable or convenient for *you*. Instead, you should be most interested in joining the church of God’s choice.

But, has God actually made a choice of a single church that you must join yourself to in order to please Him? Or, are there actually many different churches that please Him? In fact, do most churches today please Him?

Perhaps, as you have considered the reality of the religious division present in the world today, you have had some of the same questions I have had. Questions like, “Why are there so many different churches today?” “Can everyone be right?” “Is it possible to be religious and still be wrong?” “How can I know who is right?” And, “Is it possible to just practice New Testament Christianity today and only be part of the New Testament church?”

I believe that there are many people asking these kinds of questions whenever they consider two things. First, they consider the religious division and confusion that exists in the world today. They can see that those who profess “Christianity” do not agree with each other on many points of doctrine. They see that there is a great number of churches in this world today and that they are all different from each other.

Second, they consider that there is only one Bible that reveals one set of teachings from God. Surely, God (since He is perfect and His word is perfect) cannot reveal these conflicting doctrinal beliefs.

In fact, God has said that there is only “one faith” (Ephesians 4:5). No, this does not mean that everyone is acceptable to God and part of His church as long as everyone believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Instead, the word “faith” is sometimes used in the Bible to identify a system of religious belief, teaching, and practice. For instance, Acts 6:7 says that “a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Philippians 1:27 instructs Christians to “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” And, Jude 1:3 says that Jude found it necessary to write to Christians to exhort them to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

So, whenever God said that there is only “one faith,” He was saying that there is only one system of acceptable religious belief, teaching, and practice – not tens of thousands of acceptable faiths. Yet, there are many different systems of religious belief, teaching, and practice today – even within what is called “Christianity.” There is Catholic faith, Baptist faith, Methodist faith, etc., etc., etc. However, God says that there is only one faith that is revealed in the pages of the gospel.

In this lesson, we want to consider some of what God has revealed in the pages of His word about the church. We will consider the church of God’s choice that is identified in the Bible. We will consider how it is that we can identify the church of God’s choice today. Then, we will consider the reality of many “counterfeit” churches. And, we will consider what all of this means for how we should be living life on this earth.

The Church Of God’s Choice

God has made a choice concerning a church! As you read the Bible, this choice should become very clear to you. It is not left up to our own

discretion to pick out a church that we think will be pleasing to God. Instead, God has already made this choice – and we must simply learn about His choice and follow it.

God only promised to establish one church

In both the Old and New Testaments, you can observe the fact that God only intended to establish one church. As we study this point, we should note that the terms “church” and “kingdom” are often used interchangeably in the Scriptures. This can be seen in Matthew 16:18-19, when Jesus promised to build His “church” (verse 18) and give Peter the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” (verse 19). He did not switch subjects between these two verses. Instead, the terms refer to the same thing. Now, we want to consider some prophecies made about this kingdom/church to specifically notice the number of kingdoms/churches God promised to establish.

First, Daniel 2:44 says, “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” This prophecy especially concerns the timing of when God would establish His kingdom. In the context, Daniel demonstrates how that God would establish His kingdom during the reign of a fourth kingdom. This relates to the reign of the Roman Empire – and perfectly fits with the timing of Christ’s church being established in Acts 2. Then, I want you to consider how many kingdoms God promised to establish at this time. Notice that God said in these days He would set up “a kingdom.” There is no mention of any more than just one kingdom!

Second, Matthew 16:18-19 says, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Contrary to popular belief, the “rock” upon which Jesus would build His church was *not* Peter. Instead, it was the confession Peter had just made that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (in verse 16). Now, how many

churches/kingdoms did Jesus promise to build upon that single truth? He said that He would build his “church” and give Peter the keys of “the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus simply never promised to build any more than one church!

Third, Matthew 16:28 says, “Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” This passage helps us, once again, to learn something about the timing of Jesus’ kingdom/church. It would be established within the lifetimes of some who were listening to Jesus speak. So, we are not still waiting for Jesus to set up His kingdom/church – unless there are 2,000 year old people walking on this earth who are still waiting for Jesus to do what He promised to do. Then, we also learn more about the number of kingdoms/churches Jesus promised to establish. Once again, we see that Jesus only foretold one “kingdom”!

Christ only established one church

Now that we have seen that God only promised to establish one church/kingdom, let’s consider how many churches He actually established. Did God continue to have only one church/kingdom in His plan, or did His plan change to include multiple churches whenever it came time to establish one? As you consider this question, recognize that God has said, “For I am the Lord, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6). God’s plan was perfect and needed no revision.

First, consider Acts 2. This chapter marks the beginning of the church. All of the prophecies that were made about God’s church and kingdom coming into existence are fulfilled in this chapter. On the first Pentecost after Jesus’ ascension into Heaven, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus’ apostles and they began to speak as the Holy Spirit directed them. Peter’s sermon is especially identified in this chapter. In it, He spoke of Jesus Christ, demonstrating that He is truly the Son of God and that the Jews had been responsible for crucifying Him. Then, whenever they heard that teaching, some of them were “cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” (verse 37). “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the

remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (verse 38).

As Peter continued to teach and warn them of their need to be saved, verse 41 says, “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.” Verse 47 says, “praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Those who obeyed God’s instructions concerning salvation were the ones He added to His church. Then, you should notice two things. Notice that Acts 2 marks a significant transition point. Prior to Acts 2, the church/kingdom is referred to in the future tense (i.e. that it is still to be established). But, after Acts 2, the church/kingdom is referred to in the present tense (i.e. that it is in existence). Clearly, Acts 2 marks the time at which God’s church/kingdom came into existence! And, notice the number of churches/kingdoms that were established in Acts 2. Verse 47 said that those being saved were added to “the church.” No more than one church was established in Acts 2.

Second, consider Colossians 1:13. Paul wrote, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” You should notice that not only was the church already in existence, but so was the kingdom of God’s Son! This, as we have seen, is because they are one in the same. And, you should notice that there is only one kingdom that belongs to Jesus Christ. Notice that Paul said God had conveyed those who had become Christians out of darkness and into “the kingdom” that belongs to His Son.

Third, consider Ephesians 4:4. Paul said, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.” Focus on the phrase “one body” for a few moments. Ephesians 1:22-23 helps us to understand what Paul means whenever he says there is only “one body.” “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” The church is the body of Christ. Therefore, the terms “church” and “body” can be used interchangeably. So, whenever Paul says that there is “one body,” He is saying that there is one church!

Throughout the pages of the New Testament, there was only one church that existed by God's approval. Although there were local churches that existed in many different places (i.e. in Ephesus, Colossae, Philippi, Corinth, Laodicea, Thessalonica, etc.), they were all expected to be part of the one church Jesus Christ established! You see, there is only one church in the "universal" sense. But, there were many local churches.

Still, these local churches were not permitted to be divided. They were not permitted to teach, believe, and practice different doctrines as part of their Christianity. Instead, they were expected to be united. For instance, Jesus prayed for unity among those who would profess to follow Him. He prayed that "they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:21). In fact, He prayed that "they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (John 17:23). As another example, Paul commanded, "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).

Not only was it possible for all people to believe, teach, and practice the exact same things, but it was expected and commanded of them! Certainly, this could not have been the case if God had created more than one church with more than one set of teachings that governed them. But, it would be possible if God only established one church – and only gave one set of laws and instructions! This is exactly what we see throughout the pages of the New Testament. There was no more than one church that was established by God. And, anytime people were not practicing, believing, or teaching what God had revealed, they were not approved by God.

Only one church exists today

Consider this. If God only promised to establish one church (which He did) and if God only established one church in the New Testament (which He did), when did He establish any others? When did

God determine that He had made a mistake and should go back and start correcting that mistake by adding more churches with more doctrinal beliefs, teachings, and practices besides what is revealed in the New Testament? The simple fact is that He did not!

Yet, there are a great number of churches in existence today. They simply cannot all be part of the one church Jesus Christ established (that you can read about in the pages of the Bible) because they have originated *after* the church Jesus established and they teach doctrines and engage in practices that are entirely foreign to the doctrines and practices of the church in the New Testament!

Identifying God's Church

Having seen that God has only established one church, we should now begin to gain a greater understanding of that one church. I believe that a lot of the confusion that exists in the world today about the church can be traced back to a misunderstanding of what the church that Jesus established really is.

What is the church?

Many people have adopted a modern-day view of the church rather than considering what God talks about when He identifies the church. Here are a few of the common misconceptions that people have of the church today. (1) Some view the church as an earthly organization. (2) Some view the church as a social club that is responsible for providing entertainment, recreation, and social activities for its members. (3) Some view the church as a political machine that should be used to influence cultural issues and bring about changes in government and society for the betterment of humanity's existence on this earth. (4) Some view the church as a building where religious people meet together. (5) Some view the church as being the giver of the law and the savior of its members. And, (6) some view the church as being a collection of denominations/churches of people who profess to follow Jesus Christ.

Regarding this last common misunderstanding of the church, it is commonly

believed that all (or nearly all) denominations and religious organizations that believe in Jesus Christ are part of the church of Christ. Many people simply view all of these different religious organizations as being branches of the church of Christ. So, they picture the church of Christ as being a big umbrella – with Baptist churches, Methodist churches, Pentecostal churches, Presbyterian churches, Nazarene churches, Christian churches, etc. under it. Together, they are said to make up the church of Christ.

However, this is not the Biblical view of the church of God's choice. God simply did not need or create any of these other churches. And, He has never authorized their existence. Throughout the New Testament Scriptures, God was able to accomplish all of His purposes in His church – without any of these man-made churches! In fact, these churches did not come into existence until hundreds of years (and many times more than 1,500 years) after the church that Jesus established. In fact, there are still new churches being formed today! So, if God did not need any of these man-made churches in New Testament times, why should we believe that He needs them now?

The fact is that He does *not* need them today. Instead, we just need to develop the right mindset toward what the church actually is (according to the Scriptures, which reveal the mind of God to mankind, see 1 Corinthians 2:6-16). The Greek word that is translated “church” in the pages of the New Testament is the word “ekklesia.” This word can also be translated “congregation” and “assembly” – all referencing a group of people.

For instance, the word is used generally in the Bible with reference to a gathering of people. This can be in reference to a riot that had been formed in the city of Ephesus in Acts 19. Three times in Acts 19 (verses 32, 39, 41), the Bible refers to this “assembly” by using the Greek word “ekklesia.” So, this word has a general sense that refers to any assembly of people.

Then, it is especially used in a religious sense. Jesus used the word in this way when He said that He would build His church (in Matthew 16:18). The word is also used in this way in Acts 8:3, when the

Scriptures talk about Saul making havoc of the church. When this word is used in this way, it denotes the congregation/community of those who have been obedient to the gospel of Jesus Christ and have given their lives to the Lord. Therefore, the word denotes a “called out” people. To such disciples of Christ, Peter wrote, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). This is a people who have been separated from sin and are now living for the Lord!

God's church is composed of those who have obeyed Him

When the word “church” is used in this sense (as it is primarily used in the New Testament), who is included? The Bible clearly teaches that it is only those who are obedient to God's plan of salvation who are added by God to this church. His plan of salvation involves: Hearing His word (Romans 10:17), believing in Jesus Christ (John 8:24), repenting of your sins (Acts 17:30), confessing Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 22:16). Remember, in Acts 2, Peter commanded those who wanted to be saved to “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (verse 38). Then, about 3,000 people gladly received his word were baptized (verse 41). These are the ones who the Lord “added to the church daily” – because they were the ones who were being saved (verse 47)!

Today, God's church continues to be composed of those who have been obedient to this same plan of salvation. In order to be part of this church today, you must do the same things that God commanded in order to be part of His church in the New Testament times. There is no other plan of salvation that is sufficient in joining God's church!

Then, God expects those who have joined the one church that Jesus Christ established to remain faithful to Him. Revelation 2:10 records Jesus' instruction to some Christians in the city of Smyrna. He said, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw

some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” This is important because you can fall from God’s grace and lose your salvation after being saved and joining Christ’s church! Paul stated this in Galatians 5:4, when he wrote to some who had joined Christ’s church in the past and said that they had “become estranged from Christ” and “fallen from grace.”

God’s church follows the New Testament pattern

Since it is possible to fall from the grace of God after joining yourself to Christ’s one true church by obeying God’s plan of salvation, you must recognize the absolute need to follow the pattern that is revealed in the pages of God’s word. The apostle Paul wrote, “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13). So, God expects His people to be solidly holding to the completely pure and spiritually healthy words that He has revealed in the pages of the Bible. Particularly, the words written in the New Testament represent the standard that must be used in determining what is right and what is wrong – since the Old Testament has been nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:14).

Now, those who desire to please God must do everything according to the pattern/blueprint that God has revealed in the pages of the New Testament. For instance, Colossians 3:17 commands, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Nothing is excluded from this. If you desire to please God, you must have Bible authority for everything you do and say. And, this not only applies to individual Christians, but also to local churches.

The pages of the New Testament reveal a pattern/blueprint for local churches. This pattern includes the name/designation of the church, the organizational structure of the church, the work that the church does, and the worship that the church is involved in. If a church deviates at all from that pattern, it fails to be pleasing to God. You must

determine to follow God’s pattern in every area of your life if you desire to please Him!

There Are Many Counterfeit Churches

Since God only has one church that belongs to Him and there are tens of thousands of different churches that exist in the world today, there is a problem *somewhere*. But, what are we to consider every other church except that one church that belongs to Jesus Christ? Perhaps we should think of them as “counterfeit churches.” A “counterfeit” is something that is made to look like the original, but it does not have the same value. For instance, an authentic ten-dollar bill is worth a real ten dollars. However, a counterfeit ten-dollar bill is only worth the paper it’s printed on. So it is with the church. Those who are part of God’s one true church are counted among the saved. But, those who are part of man-made (counterfeit) churches are being told that they are saved, while they are actually walking on a path that leads to spiritual destruction. Just listen to Jesus in Matthew 15:13-14. He said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”

Many man-made churches exist

Today, there are tens of thousands of churches that God has not “planted”! God has simply never authorized their existence. Nor has He given them the different doctrines and practices they hold to. But, while the New Testament does not authorize the religious division that exists in the world today, it does help us to understand why it has come into existence. Even from the time when there was only one church in existence (during New Testament times), an apostasy was being foretold and division was attempting to creep into Christ’s church. Concerning such a threat, Jude wrote to some Christians, instructing them to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who

long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:3-4).

The word “apostasy” simply refers to the falling away from the one faith. Thus, religious division results. God knew that people would not remain true to the “one faith” revealed in the gospel (Ephesians 4:5; Philippians 1:27). Now, take a moment to consider the warnings in Scripture about a coming apostasy. (1) Acts 20:28-31 foretells about some who would bring error into the Ephesian congregation and draw disciples away from the truth (note that Paul was speaking to the Ephesian elders). (2) 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 says that the Day of the Lord would not come before the “falling away” comes and the man of sin is revealed. Though the “man of sin” in this passage is not specifically identified, his description leads many people to believe that this is a prophecy about the establishment of the Catholic Church or the Pope (who claims to have all authority and be infallible). (3) 1 Timothy 4:1-3 records a prophecy that some would depart from the faith. (4) 2 Timothy 4:1-4 records Paul’s instructions to Timothy to be diligent in preaching the word – and his warning about a time that would come when folks would not “endure sound doctrine,” departing from the faith.

Identifying some common problems in man-made churches

Today, we observe and deal with the results of this great falling away from the faith of the gospel. There is a departure from the faith of the gospel in many different areas. Consider a brief overview of three areas in which this departure from the one faith can be observed.

First, there has been a departure in the plan of salvation. Earlier, I overviewed God’s plan of salvation as involving: Hearing God’s word, believing in Jesus Christ, repenting of your sins, confessing Jesus Christ, being baptized for the forgiveness of sins, and remaining faithful until death. Only those who obey this plan of salvation will be saved and added to Christ’s one true church. However, many churches today have changed this plan of salvation. For instance, some churches

baptize infants who cannot sin, believe, repent, confess, etc. Some churches teach that faith is the only thing required for salvation (even though God says it is not, see James 2:14-26). Some churches teach people to ask Jesus into their hearts to be saved by saying a “Sinner’s Prayer.” And, many churches teach that baptism is a good thing to do (and should be done), but teach that it is *not* necessary for salvation. Certainly, those who do not obey God’s plan of salvation as it is taught in the Bible cannot be part of Jesus’ one true church!

Second, there has been a departure in the doctrines of Christ. There are many teachings in the pages of the Bible. However, many churches today have twisted those teachings in various ways and even formed doctrines of their own. For instance, many churches teach the doctrine of inherited sin (or, original sin). Many churches teach the doctrine of “once saved, always saved.” Some churches teach that Jesus is not God. There are many false doctrines that are taught today and lead people away from God’s truth – just as God said would happen in 2 Peter 2:1-3!

Third, there has been a departure from the pattern found in the New Testament. There are churches today that depart from the pattern with regard to the name/designation of the church (see Romans 16:16). There are churches today that depart from the pattern with regard to the organizational structure of the church by having a Pope, church president, convention, one pastor, a “reverend,” etc. There are churches today that depart from the pattern of work by supporting man-made institutions from the church’s collection. There are churches today that depart from the pattern of worshiping God by playing mechanical instruments of music in their worship (see Colossians 3:16). There are many departures from the pattern that lead churches away from God rather than to Him!

Many religious people will be lost

The fact of the matter is that it is possible to be religious and still be wrong. In fact, Satan is perfectly okay with some people being religious and calling themselves “Christians” – as long as they are not part of Christ’s church and follow God’s pattern. Actually, even Satan “transforms himself into an

angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). He actually accomplishes a great deal of his deception through these counterfeit churches and religious organizations. 2 Corinthians 11:15 says that “it is no great thing if his [Satan’s] ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”

Just listen to Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23. “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” Yes, Jesus says that there will be people who claim to be His followers, who will be eternally condemned to Hell – because they had not followed the pattern and obeyed God’s word! This would certainly include those who are part of these counterfeit churches (read 2 Peter 2 for more information).

Living With The Reality Of One True Church

Because there really is only one true church that belongs to God, you need to do all that you can to be part of it. You must recognize the spiritual dangers that are posed to your soul by those churches that are not God’s church. So, please consider how you should respond to the reality of one true church.

Study God’s pattern

I have not been able to go in much detail about the pattern God has revealed in the New Testament for His church. Instead, I have chosen to emphasize the fact that such a pattern really does exist. Now, if you want to live your life in obedience to that pattern, you must determine to do your own study about the church. Determine to learn the pattern so well that you can recognize any time the pattern is perverted. Remember, God has warned us that there would be those who would teach false

doctrines in the name of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 7:15-20, Galatians 1:6-12, and 2 Peter 2:1-3). Therefore, you should be like the noble people in Berea, who searched the Scriptures daily in order to see whether the things they were being taught were actually true (see Acts 17:11).

Get out of religious error

If your search of the Scriptures leads you to the conclusion that you are currently involved in a counterfeit church, you must make the determination to get away from it. That church is not helpful to your soul (if you desire to spend eternity in Heaven)! Paul instructed, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Ephesians 5:11). Then, the apostle John wrote, “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds” (2 John 1:9-11).

Join God’s one true church

Getting out of religious error is not enough (though it is a good start). You must also do everything in your ability to join God’s one true church. You do that by being obedient to the plan of salvation that you can read about in the pages of God’s word. When you do, God will add you to His one true church and you will be counted among the saved (Acts 2:47). Then, you are highly encouraged by the Scriptures to join yourself to a local church of Christ that teaches and practices exactly what you can read in the pages of the New Testament. If you cannot find any in your community that does this, then you should endeavor to start one (even if it must meet in your own home).

Conclusion

Yes, there really is only one church! This is the church of Christ – because He is the one who bought this church with His own blood (see Acts

20:28). Only this church will be saved. All those who are outside of Christ's church will be lost eternally in Hell. But, will you choose to get out of religious error and only be part of the church Christ has established?

Study Question

What kind of religious division exists in the world today (even among "Christianity")?

1. The Church Of God's Choice

How many churches did God promise to establish?

How many churches did Christ establish?

How many churches exist today with God's approval?

2. Identifying God's Church

What are some false ideas about the church? What is the church?

Who composes God's church?

Is there a pattern for God's church? Where do you find the pattern?

3. There Are Many Counterfeit Churches

What did God say would happen to the one faith?

What are some common problems in man-made churches?

Will religious people (even those who profess to be "Christians") be lost?

4. Living With The Reality Of One True Church

Why should you study God's pattern?

Why should you get out of religious error?

Why should you join God's one true church?