

Does The Bible Teach There Is Only One Church?

Bible Answers About The Church

Jesus said, "I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18). The word "church" in this passage is in the singular. Our Lord did not say "churches," or "one of the churches," or, "a church." Rather, Jesus said, "church" (singular). To illustrate, if there is a vacant lot (absolutely empty of everything) and I say to you "I will park my car in this lot." How many cars would be in this lot? Suppose I then say to you, "Take the car of your choice." You would respond by saying, "I cannot take the car of my choice, for there is but one car there." The same illustrates the Lord's promise to build His church. He was not giving us a choice; rather, He was promising to build one church.

Paul told the Ephesian elders to "Feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). Paul also said that Christ, "also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). The Lord Jesus Christ died for one church, His church. What denominationalist would be presumptuous enough to affirm that the Lord died for his given denomination?

In the days of the apostles, no one ever asked, "Which church are you a member of?" WHY? No protestant denomination can trace its history back any further than the days of Martin Luther, 1517! There was no official pope until 607 A.D. when Boniface III assumed the title universal bishop, or pope. Therefore, protestant denominations and Catholic churches did not exist in the apostolic age. When the gospel was preached in the first century, such being the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11), only churches of Christ resulted and that is why Paul could write "The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16). Since one of God's immutable laws is that seed bears after its kind (Gen. 1:11), when the gospel is preached in any century, only the Lord's church will result. Denominationalism exists because some other seed (man-made doctrine) than the gospel has been preached and planted.

In observing what the church is, one can easily see the singularity of the church:

- The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18, 24), and there is only one body (Rom. 12:4, 5; I Cor. 12:13, 20; Eph. 2:16; 4:4; Col. 3:15). Therefore, there is only one church. As there is a singular head (Christ), there is a singular body (church). Otherwise, we would have a monstrosity of one head, yet many bodies.
- The church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33; Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 11:2). Christ taught the monogamy (oneness) of marriage (Rom. 7:1-4). Did He teach one thing and practice another? Of course not. Jesus Christ has but one bride, the church.

We could continue to look at other figures of speech setting forth the nature of the church such as the church being the one fold of God (John 10:16) or that the church is the family of God (I Tim. 3:15; Eph. 3:14-15). But all of the figures of speech clearly indicate the singularity of the church.

Because there is one church, the Bible emphasizes the reasons for, and the importance of unity. (1) Unity is good and pleasant (Psa. 133:1). (2) God hates the sin of discord (Prov. 6:16-19). (3) Christ prayed for unity (Jno. 17:20-21). The apostles demanded unity (I Cor. 1:10). (5) Christ is not divided (I Cor. 1:11-13). (6) Division is a mark of carnality (I Cor. 3:1-3). (7) Division is contrary to the doctrine of Christ (Rom. 16:17-18). (8) Christ died for unity (Eph. 2:16). (9) God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). (10) The Holy Spirit has given the plan for unity (Eph. 4:1-16) as follows:

- One body –unity of organization,
- One Spirit – unity of guidance,
- One hope – unity of aspiration,
- One Lord – unity of authority,
- One faith – unity of message,
- One baptism – unity of practice, and
- One God – unity of worship.

Even religious leaders have believed that religious division is sinful and contrary to the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ. That is what the ecumenical efforts of past years have been about. The idea of many churches is simply foreign to the Bible. If all man-made doctrines were laid aside and everyone would take their stand on the Bible all of the divisions in modern Christendom would cease and the professed followers of Jesus Christ would be one as the New Testament Christians. The New Testament is the only safe course in life and the final court of appeal on earth in all religious matters (Gal. 1:6-9). This inspired creed enables the church Jesus built to make an earnest and powerful appeal for unity according to the plea of the Savior's prayer (Jno. 17:20-21), the only consistent plea, and the only possible basis for Christian unity today.

This is the plea of the Monte Vista church of Christ. Would you like to investigate this plea further?

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