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How Can You Know Which Church to Attend?

Find the answer in the Bible.

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What is the most important factor in choosing a church? Familiar denomination? Proximity to your home? An engaging pastor? Nice people? The right answer depends not on what *seems* right, but on solid understanding of fundamental Bible truths.

The Bible actually says there are churches that can lead you *away* from God. Christians are to follow Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6), but He Himself warned that *false churches* would arise, claiming to speak in His name. "Take heed that no man deceive you," He told His disciples. "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5). Many people today *claim* to be Christian. They *proclaim Christ*. Yet they *deceive many*!

The Apostle Paul also warned against "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness ..." (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Did you know that Satan has ministers?

To discern a false minister, or a false church, you must know the *teachings* of Jesus Christ. If you casually accept a church's teaching because it sounds right, you will be led astray. Follow the example of the Bereans: *Search the Scriptures* to see whether what you're hearing matches the Bible (Acts 17:11). "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Jesus prophesied of false Christian churches. But He also promised that His Church, which He personally founded, would always exist. "I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH," He said, "and the gates of *hell* [or, the grave] shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). If you believe Jesus, you know that His true Church exists somewhere on Earth today!

To recognize that Church, you need to understand the *purpose* for which Christ founded it. This may shock you, but the Bible clearly shows that the Church's purpose is *NOT* to help God "save the world." Jesus made no attempt to gain converts or to invite people to "give their hearts to Him" or to "accept Him as their personal Savior." Instead, He "called out" 12 disciples, or students. He gave them special instruction but *HID* the truth from almost everyone else!

Read Matthew 13, where Jesus told these few men, "[I]t is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but *to them it is not given*. ... But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Jesus gave that understanding to only a handful. His Church is a comparatively "little flock" (Luke 12:32). At the end of Jesus's human life, only 120 people were ready to become part of the true Church (Acts 1:15). The *rest of the world* was cut off from God—and still is!

The Bible shows that God has a master plan for saving the world—people, living and dead, who were not true Christians. But that phase of His plan comes after Christ's Second Coming. Members of the true Church are called to prepare for that

future time of salvation. Churches that are ignorant of this fundamental biblical truth are not being led by Jesus Christ and will lead you into serious error!

This raises another CRUCIAL point regarding the question of which church to attend. The Bible shows not only that Jesus Christ *founded* the Church, but also that He is its living *Head* (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23). He actively *guides* it.

Does it make sense that the Church that Christ founded would be divided into many sects and denominations? That Christ would lead different organizations, each teaching different and conflicting doctrines? God is not the author of confusion; He does things “decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40; the word “churches” in verse 33 merely refers to various congregations of the one true Church). Teachings that contradict one another cannot all be true and cannot be inspired by Christ!

The reality is, Christ founded *one* Church, and He actively leads *one* Church. No other teaching can be supported by Scripture.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that *yæll* speak the SAME THING,” God inspired the Apostle Paul to write, “and that there be NO DIVISIONS among you; but that ye be PERFECTLY JOINED TOGETHER in the *same mind* and in the *same judgment*” (1 Corinthians 1:10). That is true unity! We should expect to see this unity within the Christ-led Body of believers. There should be *no division* in what is believed, taught or preached.

The many differing and opposing churches of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism definitely do not “all speak the same thing.” When looking for which church to be a part of, the very existence of so many churches, denominations and sects, believing vastly different doctrines, emphasizes how *easy* it is to become part of a false church!■

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