

# One Church or Many Churches?

By  
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# ONE CHURCH OR MANY CHURCHES?

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## Two great questions:

- Is there only one true church?
- If so, does a person have to be a member of that church to be a saved Christian?

The answer presented in this study is: **YES.**

- These notes will attempt to prove from the scriptures that there is only one church and that saved Christians are found only in the Lord's one church.
- Each person will have to judge for himself whether or not the scriptures presented in this booklet prove the case.

**NOTE:** Everyone should be interested in what the scriptures say, not what the majority of people say. If truth hinges on what the majority says, then the case is already decided against the idea of one church. However, truth is not determined by majority vote. Truth hinges on the word of God Himself.

## **John 17:17**

17 Sanctify them by Your truth. **Your word is truth.**

## **A ROAD-MAP FOR THIS STUDY**

In order to prove there is only one single church established and approved by the Lord, the following points will be presented:

- 1) The word "church" (ejkkllhsiva) means "called out from."
- 2) Hence, the church is a group of people (not a building) who have been "called out of" the world and into a body of fellow believers.
- 3) Jesus promised to build only one such church (called-out-body).
- 4) The Lord Himself added people to this called-out-body when each believed on Him enough to be baptized in water for the remission of sins.
- 5) No saved person was ever left out of that church.
- 6) No unsaved person was ever added to that church.
- 7) This called-out-body (church) was purchased by the blood of Christ.
- 8) This called-out-body (church) was founded on the teachings of Christ.
- 9) The apostles taught the same doctrine of Christ everywhere they went.
- 10) A curse was placed upon anyone who would teach any other doctrine.
- 11) Since every congregation was organized by the same doctrine, every congregation was identical in doctrine and practice.
- 12) The members of the called-out-body (church) were forbidden to divide the church into different denominations.
- 13) Those causing divisions contrary to the doctrine of Christ were to be "marked and avoided."
- 14) The one church of Christ will always exist because it is produced by a "seed" which is the word of God.

- 15) This called-out-body (church) will always exist because it is founded upon the rock of Christ's teachings (word), and that word can never be destroyed.
- 16) Any church not founded by the Lord will be "uprooted" and destroyed at the end of this age.

## EXAMINING EACH POINT

### **1) The word "church" (ejkklhsiva) means "called out from."**

The Greek word **ejkklhsiva** (the word translated "church") is composed of two parts:

The prefix **ejk** meaning "out of."

The root **klhsiva** meaning, "to be called."

The church is a group of people – not a building. The church is a group of people "called out of" something.

### **2) The church is a group of people (not a building) who have been "called out of" the world and into a body of fellow believers.**

People who were considered Christians in the Bible were first "called" by the gospel:

#### **2 Thessalonians 2:14**

14 ... He called you by our gospel, ...

These people were "called *out of* the world":

## **1 Peter 2:9**

9 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*;

These people were "called into a body of fellow believers":

## **Ephesians 4:25**

25 ... we are members of one another.

## **3) Jesus promised to build only one such church (called-out-body).**

### **Matthew 16:18**

18 ... I will build My church ...

Notice the word "church" is singular. The Lord promised to build only one church.

### **Ephesians 1:22-23**

22 And [God] put all things under [Jesus] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to **the church**,

23 **which is His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

According to the above passage, the church is "the body" of Christ. Now observe the following passage:

### **Ephesians 4:4**

4 **There is one body** ...

If there is only one body and the body is the church, then there is only one church. All of this information, when put together, logically leads to the conclusion there is only one church acceptable to the Lord – not many churches.

**4) The Lord Himself added people to this called-out-body when each believed on Him enough to be baptized in water for the remission of sins.**

On the Day of Pentecost, when the church was established by Christ, the people were told to believe in the Lord:

**Acts 2:36**

36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel *know assuredly* that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

To "know assuredly" means to believe. These people were being commanded to believe in Christ with all their hearts. After being instructed to believe, observe what else they were told:

**Acts 2:37-38**

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

38 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.

"For the remission of sins" means "for the forgiveness of sins." Sins are forgiven based on the blood of Christ (Mt 26:28). Acts 2:38 teaches that the blood of Christ is applied at the point of baptism in water. In other words, when a sinner believes enough to repent and be baptized "for the remission of sins," God takes the blood of Christ and washes away that person's sins (Acts 22:16).

Did anyone respond?

**Acts 2:41**

41 Then those who gladly received his word were *baptized*; and that day about three thousand souls were *added* to them.

Notice:

- People were being baptized.
- After baptism they were being added by someone to something.

**Q:** Who was doing the adding? To what were they being added?

**Acts 2:47**

47 praising God and having favor with all the people.  
And *the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

When people were baptized "for the remission of sins" (v38), they were then considered "saved" (v47). The Lord Himself added these saved people to His called-out-body (the church).

**5) No saved person was ever left out of that church.**

**6) No unsaved person was ever added to that church.**

Examine the following two verses together:

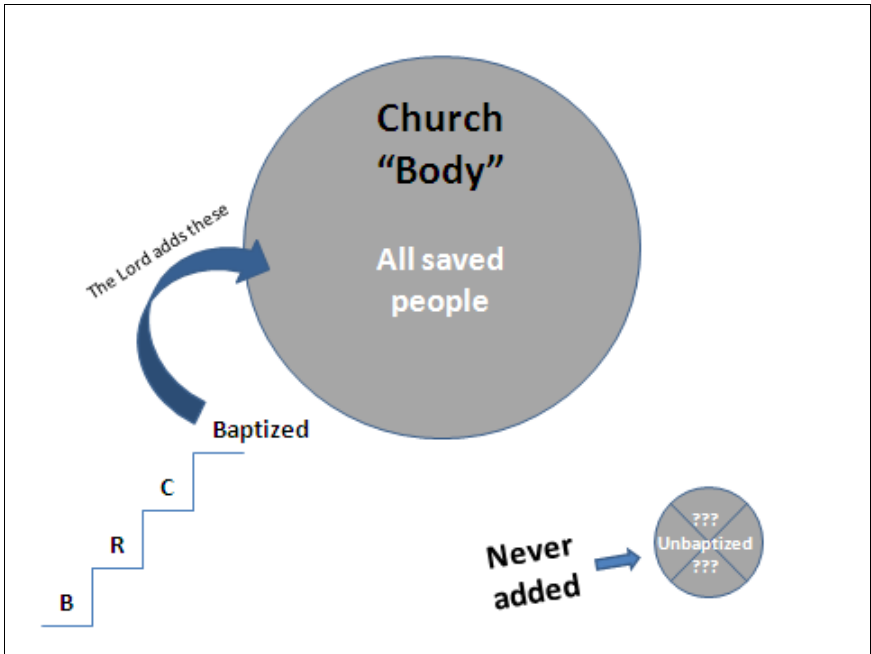
**Acts 2**

41 Then those who gladly received his word were *baptized*; and that day about three thousand souls were *added* to them.

47 ... And *the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

Compare v41 with v47 carefully. Notice that "those baptized" (v41) corresponds with "those being saved" (v47). Clearly, to be saved one must be baptized. This fits perfectly with what Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk 16:16).





**Q:** Were any saved people left out of the church by the Lord?

**A:** Not one.

**Q:** Were any unsaved people added to the church by the Lord?

**A:** Not one.

The Lord does not forget or make mistakes. If a person was baptized for the remission of sins, he is saved, and the saved are always added by the Lord to the church.

**7) This called-out-body (church) was purchased by the blood of Christ.**

**Acts 20:28**

28 ... shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

### **Ephesians 5:25**

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,**

### **1 Peter 1:18-19**

18 knowing that you were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,  
19 but **with the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Peter wrote this to members of the church.

- The church was purchased with the blood of Christ.
- If one can be saved without the church, then Jesus wasted His blood.
- (a) Since no one can be saved without the blood of Christ and (b) since the church was purchased by the blood of Christ, (c) the church is absolutely essential for salvation.

### **Ephesians 5:23**

23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also **Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.**

If someone says, "*You do not have to be a member of my church to be saved and go to heaven,*" that would not be the Lord's church – because the Lord's church is absolutely essential for salvation.

**8) This called-out-body (church) was founded on the teachings of Christ.**

### **Matthew 16:18**

18 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.

Jesus is the "rock" upon which the church is built:

### **Isaiah 28:16**

16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:

"Behold, I lay in Zion *a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation;*  
Whoever believes will not act hastily.

### **Isaiah 8:14**

14 He will be as a sanctuary,

But *a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense ...*

The apostle Peter Himself applied both of the above passages to Jesus (1 Pet 2:5-8; Acts 4:11). Jesus is the "cornerstone," the "rock of offense" upon which the church is built. If there is still doubt about the foundation of the church, the following passages clearly teach Jesus is the foundation of the church; He is the "rock" upon which the church is built.

### **1 Corinthians 3:11**

11 For no other *foundation* can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is *Jesus Christ*.

### **Ephesians 2:19-20**

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

20 having been built on *the foundation* of the apostles and prophets, *Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,*

**Q:** What do the scriptures mean when they teach: Jesus is the foundation of the church?

**A:** They mean the church is founded upon what Jesus taught.

- Teaching means "doctrine"
- This is why doctrine is important ⇒ because the church of the Lord is founded upon what the Lord taught.

To be founded on what the Lord taught means to be submissive to 100% of what the Lord taught. If a group claims to be the Lord's church but does not submit to all which the Lord and His apostles taught, they are not really the Lord's church.

### **Matthew 7:24-27**

24 "Therefore whoever hears *these sayings of Mine, and does them*, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the *rock*:

25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26 "But everyone who hears *these sayings of Mine, and does not do them*, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

Here is the foundation of the church: *The teachings of Jesus*.

- If a church practices the sayings of Jesus, according to v24, they are built upon a rock (*pevtra*). (The word used by Jesus in Mt 16:18)
- If a church does not practice the sayings of Jesus, according to v26, they are built upon *the sand*, and that church will fall.

It is that simple. The apostle John would put it this way:

### **1 John 2:3-5**

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

**9) The apostles taught the same doctrine of Christ everywhere they went.**

**Acts 2:42**

42 ... they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine ...

**1 Corinthians 4:17**

17 For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of **my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.**

**1 Corinthians 7:17**

17 But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. *And so I ordain in all the churches.*

**1 Corinthians 14:33**

33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, *as in all the churches of the saints.*

Since the church of the Lord is built upon His doctrine and since the apostles taught the same doctrine everywhere they went, each congregation established would necessarily be identical.

**10) A curse was placed upon anyone teaching any other doctrine.**

**Galatians 1:8-9**

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Since no other doctrine was allowed and since the Lord's church is built upon His doctrine, no other church would be possible. Every church built upon the same doctrine would be identical.

**11) Since every congregation was organized by the same doctrine, every congregation was identical in doctrine and practice.**

Think about this carefully:

- The church is founded upon the doctrine of Christ (Mt 16:18; 1 Cor 3:11).
- The Lord's doctrine is found in the written word (2 Tim 3:16-17).
- The written word is the "seed" of the kingdom:

**Luke 8:11**

11 "Now the parable is this: *The seed is the word of God.*

God designed seeds to "bring forth after their kind":

**Genesis 1:12**

12 And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields *seed according to its kind*, and the tree that yields fruit, whose *seed* is in itself *according to its kind*. And God saw that it was good.

Because seed "brings forth according to its kind":

- A corn seed will produce only a corn plant.
- A wheat seed will produce only a wheat plant.
- A corn seed will not produce *squash*.
- A wheat seed will not produce *okra*.

Since the word of the Lord is the "seed" of the kingdom (Lk 8:11), when the pure word (seed) of God is preached, the only possible result will be a church identical to the original church of the Lord. If differing churches are established, it is because different seeds were planted. Seeds "bring forth after their kind" (Gen 1:12).

**12) The members of the called-out-body (church) were forbidden to divide the church into different denominations.**

**1 Corinthians 1:10**

10 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.

"No divisions" means "no denominations." This passage speaks for itself. Dividing the church into denominations which offer a variety of doctrines and practices is strictly forbidden.

**13) Those causing divisions contrary to the doctrine of Christ were to be "marked and avoided."**

**Romans 16:17**

17 Now I urge you, brethren, *mark those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*

Notice the standard: "the doctrine which you learned." The doctrine of the Lord is the foundation of the church. If a different doctrine is taught, the very foundation of the church is being attacked.

**2 John 9-11**

9 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.

10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring *this doctrine*, do not receive him into your house nor greet him;

11 for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

Both passages speak for themselves. Dividing the church into denominations which offer a variety of doctrines and practices is strictly forbidden.

**14) The one church of Christ will always exist because it is produced by a "seed" which is the word of God.**

**Luke 8:11**

11 ... The seed is the word of God.

**Matthew 24:35**

35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

**1 Peter 1:25**

25 But *the word of the LORD endures forever.*"

Now *this is the word* which by *the gospel* was preached to you.

The only way to destroy the church is to destroy the seed which produced it. The seed (word of God) cannot be destroyed; therefore, the church of the Lord can never be destroyed. It will always exist even if it exists only in the form of seed.

**15) The one church of Christ will always exist because it is founded upon the "rock."**

**Matthew 7:24-25**

24 "Therefore whoever hears *these sayings of Mine*, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:



25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was *founded on the rock*.

### **Daniel 2:44**

44 And in the days of these kings [the Roman 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*.

As noted earlier, the only way to destroy the church is to destroy the doctrine (word) which produced it. The doctrine of the Lord (His word) cannot be destroyed; therefore, since the church is built upon the doctrine of Christ, that church will always stand.

**16) Any church not founded by the Lord will be "uprooted" at the end of this age.**

### **Matthew 15:13-14**

13 But He answered and said, "*Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted*."

14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

The reason different churches exist is because different seeds have been planted. If the pure word of God alone were preached, only one plant (church) would result. Notice the following parable:

### **Matthew 13:24-30**

24 Another parable [Jesus] put forth to them, saying: "*The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field*;

25 but while men slept, *his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way*.

26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'

29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.'

30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "*First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.*"

**Q:** What produced the tares?

**A:** Different seed.

**Q:** What will happen to those plants (churches) which were not produced by the word of God?

**A:** They will be "*bound in bundles and burned*" at the end of time.

## **MATTERS OF CONCERN**

The reason we have different churches is because different doctrines are being taught and practiced by the people. What are some of the doctrines which the Lord and His apostles taught but which are being ignored by many churches? Consider the following list:

- 1) Salvation is not by "faith only" (Ja 2:24).
- 2) Salvation by faith + works of obedience (Ja 2:24).
- 3) Salvation by the blood of Christ at the point of baptism (Acts 2:38).
- 4) Baptism is immersion and in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19).
- 5) Alien sinners are not saved by prayer (Jn 9:31).
- 6) Saved Christians may lose their salvation by disobedience (2 Pet 2:20-22).
- 7) Babies are born pure and innocent – no inherited sin (Rom 7:9).
- 8) Jesus is now reigning in the "kingdom" (church) – there will be no future kingdom established on earth (Col 1:13).
- 9) Revelation was completed in the apostolic era (first century) (Jude 3).
- 10) Miracles ceased with completed revelation (1 Cor 13:8-13).
- 11) OT law (10 commandments) was replaced with NT law (Col 2:14).
- 12) Communion on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7).
- 13) One unbroken communion loaf (1 Cor 10:16-17).
- 14) One communion cup (1 Cor 11:25).
- 15) Unfermented grape juice in communion (Mt 26:17-29).
- 16) A cappella singing (Eph 5:19).
- 17) Women remain silent in all church-conducted assemblies (1 Cor 14:34-35).
- 18) No simultaneous Bible classes (1 Cor 14:23-40).
- 19) One collection on the first day of the week (1 Cor 16:1-2).

20) No social gospel offered (food banks, money offered for rent, utilities, etc.) (1 Cor 3:11-15).

This is not an exhaustive list, but a sample of doctrines commonly ignored in our day and time. These doctrines matter because changing the doctrine of Christ is an attack upon the foundation of the church. Remember:

- The Lord's church is founded upon the Lord's doctrine (Eph 2:19-20).
- The apostles taught that same doctrine to every single church (1 Cor 4:17).
- Men were warned not to change the doctrine (Gal 1:8-9).
- Anyone causing division "contrary to the doctrine" was to be "marked and avoided" (Rom 16:17).
- The only church which the Lord will save is His own church founded upon His doctrine (Mt 7:24-25).
- Any church built upon "the sand" (a different doctrine) will "fall" (Mt 7:26-27); it will be "uprooted" (Mt 15:13) and "burned" (Mt 13:30).

It is a serious mistake to tamper with the foundation of the Lord's church.

## CONCLUSION

We should take warning from an OT passage:

### **Judges 21:25**

25 In those days there was no king in Israel; *everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

These were the "Dark-Ages" of Israel's history. We are seeing those days again when "*every man does what is right in his own eyes.*" This was and is anarchy. Different churches exist because different doctrines are being taught and practiced by various groups of people. Just because one has the privilege to believe what he wishes does not mean he is *correct* in what he believes and does. Not all accounts are settled during this life. A Judgment-Day is coming when each person must stand before the Lord and give account for everything done (2 Cor 5:10).

When the Lord taught His disciples how to pray, He taught them to pray like this:

### **Matthew 6:9-10**

9 In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come.

*Your will be done*

*On earth as it is in heaven.*

- In heaven, is there division – many different groups of angels trying to get other angels to join their group?
- In heaven, are angels allowed to choose for themselves what they shall *believe*?
- In heaven, are angels allowed to choose for themselves how they shall *serve* and *worship* God?

The answer to all of these questions is: NO.

- There is unity in heaven.
- Everyone believes the same thing in heaven.
- Everyone serves and worships alike in heaven.

In the same way, God's will should be done on earth as it is in heaven.

There are not saved Christians in many churches, because, according to Acts 2:41 and 47, every saved person is added by the Lord Himself to the one church.

The Lord has only one church, and there are saved Christians only in the Lord's church. That one church is produced by the Lord's doctrine (teaching). When His teachings are fully believed and obeyed, the result will be the Lord's church (the church of Christ). (Mt 7:24-25).

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