IS ONE CHURCH AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?
(Matt 16:18; Eph 1:22-23; 5:22-32; 1 Tim 3:15)

A. The meaning of “church”.

1. The English word “church” is from the Greek kuriakos meaning belonging to Christ.

2. The word Jesus & Paul used is the Greek ecclesia (a collective noun) means to call out.
   a. In Greek & Roman cities heralds were used to call people out of their homes to hear a message or to join in some activity (Acts 19:39).
   b. Jesus invested this word with a spiritual meaning, describing those called out of Satan’s domain into Christ’s (1 Pet 2:9).

3. The word church can describe a single congregation of God’s people as well as describing His people all over the world.

B. The popular idea that “one church is as good as another” overlooks a simple Biblical fact.

1. There is one body, the church (Eph 4:4), & that one body is a collection of souls saved by obedience to Christ (Acts 2:47; Eph 5:23).

C. The churches of men generally agree to disagree on matters of a moral & doctrinal nature.

1. Members seek unity upon common ground & not on the basis of God’s Word.
   a. That may be all right in the business world, but the Lord’s church is commanded to think, teach & act alike (1 Cor 1:10).

D. Yet it is still common to hear people say things like:

1. “Join the church of your choice.”
2. “Any church will do; one is as good as another.”

3. “Churches are like vitamins—take one; it doesn’t matter which one you choose.”

4. “Churches are like motor oil; there are different brands, but any of them will do the job.”

5. Almost as if it is a foregone conclusion that doctrinal unity in Christ is impossible.

[Do these opinions stand the test of truth? Are they true to the Word of God?]

I. COMMON SENSE

A. First of all, would God leave something as important as the “church” & “salvation” up to human judgment?

B. Secondly, does not the New Testament tell us that Satan active among religious people, even among Christians (2 Cor 11:4; 1 John 2:19)?

C. Thirdly, does anyone ever succeed at something by being indifferent or unconcerned?

1. Anyone who would say that all churches are alike probably has not investigated what Jesus taught about the kingdom.

2. The church is comprised of people who are in the kingdom of God, & those who are in the kingdom are those who actively sought to be (Matt 13:45; 22:10-11).

[So this issue is too important to ignore? Our attitude ought to be like that of the Jews of Bereans (Acts 17:11).]

II. SCRIPTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. A person who wants to find the Lord’s church today is in the same boat as someone in the 1st century who was looking for the TRUE Christ!
John 4:29 (Samaritan woman) – Come; see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. **Could this be the Christ?** That was a question they could not afford to ignore, & they had to be careful about their conclusions because there were imposters (Acts 5:36-37).

John 7:24-31 (Jesus) – Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. It is worth mentioning that Jesus made that statement to the Jews who were trying to decide whether or not He was the Christ.

John 7:26-27 – ...Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ? 27 However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from. ... And many of the people believed in Him, & said, “When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?”

John 5:39 – You **search the Scriptures**, for in them you think you have eternal life; & **these are they which testify of Me**.

Some were judging Christ with righteous judgment, but most were not.

1. Likewise, some today will use Scripture to identify the Lord’s church, but most will not.

B. **So today** if we have correctly identified the Jesus of the New Testament to be the Christ, would we not want to correctly identify His church?

1. After all, the Lord is not obligated to accept just any church that wears His name.

2. In fact, Jesus warned that many would carry on His name under false pretenses (Matt 7:21-23); Paul stated the same...

Acts 20:29-30 – For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves **men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves**.

[Just as with people, churches that do not respect the authority of Jesus Christ forfeit the right to wear His name (2 John 9-10).]

Explanation of 2 John 9-10. What is “the doctrine of Christ?” The phrase, as it is found in the Greek text, can be taken one of two ways.

- **Objectively** – the teachings about Christ.
- **Subjectively** – the teachings given by Christ.

Some argue that this should be taken in the **objective** case, limiting it to the doctrine “about” Christ, in particular, the doctrine “about” Jesus having come in the flesh (v. 7). This fits the immediate context.
However, limiting the rule of verses 10-11 to false teaching “about” the incarnation alone is contrary to other teachings found in the New Testament. It also makes our spiritual fellowship with others dependent on only one question: “Do we believe that Christ came in the flesh?” Every other doctrinal question becomes insignificant.

The stronger argument is in favor of the subjective case: the teachings “given by” Christ.

- Matt 16:6, 12 – the doctrine of the Pharisees & Sadducees.
- Titus 2:9-10 – the doctrine of God our Savior?
- Rev. 2:14 – “the doctrine of Balaam.”
- Rev. 2:15 – “the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.”

The subjective case fits the greater context of the entire epistle. In this epistle, John has emphasized “they that have known the truth” (v. 1), those “walking in truth” (v. 4), & those that “walk after his commandments” (v. 6).

The NT commands Christians to follow ALL the teachings given by Christ, not just those teachings about Christ (John 8:31; 14:15; 1 Tim. 4:16; Heb. 5:9).

III. MISTATEMENTS – MISCONCEPTIONS

A. A question often asked (in scorn): “Do you believe that one has to be a member of the church of Christ to be saved?”

1. Questions like that indicate some misconceptions about the nature of the church Jesus built.
   a. The church is not a single congregation.
   b. The church is not a group of congregations.
   c. The church is not one church among many.
   d. The church does not grant salvation.

B. The church is a collection of the saved (Eph 5:23) it is NOT the Savior.

1. The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) converted on the roadside was as much a member of the church as any Jew converted in Jerusalem (Acts 2).
a. The difference – the Jews made up the church in Jerusalem, while the eunuch was not yet a member of any local church.

2. The church belonging to Christ consists of those whom the Lord has saved & added to His body after they obey the gospel (Acts 2:41, 47; 11:22-24, 26).

C. The Lord’s church is comprised of His disciples; & they are not members of any denomination.

1. Paul said the church is the “pillar & ground of truth” (1 Tim 3:15), but she can fail to do her duty on the individual level & on the level of a local congregation!

Eph 4:3-6 – endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace One body (the church Jesus built & organized to do His work & to conduct its worship of God in Spirit & Truth), One Spirit (the Holy Spirit who guided the apostles into all the Truth). One hope (everlasting life in heaven following the judgment). One Lord (the Savior & Son of God Jesus Christ). One faith (the entirety of New Testament revelation, which points us to Jesus, & Outlines the organization, work & worship of the Lord’s true church). One baptism (water baptism of a penitent believer for the remission of sins). One God & Father (to whom the kingdom will belong when Jesus returns)

[The Lord’s church IS NOT a part of any organization established after the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.]

CLOSING

A. Great care should be taken when choosing a congregation with which to work & worship.

1. It can only be done properly through a prayerful & honest investigation of the Scriptures (Col 3:17).

B. An equally important question today is, “have you obeyed the gospel of Christ?”

1. Because one does not become a member of the Lord’s church until he becomes a Christian.

[ Fellowship with other Christians, in a local church, grows out of fellowship with Christ (1 John 1:3-4). DO YOU HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST?]