

Why the church of Christ?

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Questions aren't a bad thing
 - 1. We get lied to a lot (especially when it comes to religion) and it's understandable that we'd want to ask questions
 - 2. As long as we're willing to hear God's answers
 - 3. As long as we're willing to accept God's answers
- B. One of the questions being asked by a lot of people that you and I may talk to (sometimes it is a question that SOME OF US also ask) is **"IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST REALLY THE ONLY TRUE CHURCH?"**
 - 1. In a world in which we get suspicious at hearing someone or something claim that it is the truth, the real deal, etc.
 - a) In which few would claim absolute truth
 - b) In which tolerance is the highest of virtues
 - 2. For the church of Christ to claim that it is God's people, the true church, the real deal, invites doubt, skepticism, and plenty of questions.
- C. So, I am going to sort of argue with myself today
 - 1. Ask questions of myself, that I have been asked
 - 2. Questions that are good and valid
 - 3. Questions, I hope, that someone has asked you or you have asked yourself
 - 4. And try to offer answers from the Scriptures

II. **For example — HERE'S A QUESTION — "TEACHING THAT THERE'S JUST ONE CHURCH SOUNDS VERY NARROW; HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?"**

- A. **Jesus came to build only one —**
 - 1. Matt.16:18 — "upon this rock I will build **MY church**"
 - 2. Eph. 4:4 — "**one body**"
 - 3. **Eph. 5:22-33**
 - a) The church is Christ's bride;
 - b) Jesus came to marry only one —
 - c) ...shall we make Him a polygamist?
- B. **Besides, the Lord even said that it would be narrow — Matt. 7:13,14**
 - 1. It is not meant to be elitist or exclusive,
 - 2. Just **defined** by obedience to God's will
 - a) Matt. 7:21-23 — "**Not everyone** who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but...
 - b) **...he who does the will** of My Father who is in Heaven will enter."

3. Yes, it is narrow, but that is not bad, because ANYONE can be part of it, if they will simply obey the Lord.

III. Someone else says, "WELL, SURE THERE'S ONLY ONE CHURCH — COMPOSED OF ALL THE DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY."

A. What makes one denomination different from another

1. Doctrine
2. Practices
3. Moral standards
4. Leadership
5. Emphasis on doctrine, since teachings direct all the rest
6. So, getting back to the question, "Isn't there really only one church composed of all the denominations?"

B. I would point out that's not what the Bible says

1. It's not what Jesus describes in John 17:20-23 in His prayer to the Father...

"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; **that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You**, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, **that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity**, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."

- a) Do the Father and Son have different teachings? Practices? Moral standards? Leadership?
 - b) Then could Jesus' one church really have different teachings? Practices, Moral standards? Leadership?
 - c) Clearly, the answer is a resounding "No!"
2. It is also not what Paul taught in Eph. 4:4-6...

"There is one **body** and one **Spirit**, just as also you were called in one **hope** of your calling; one **Lord**, one **faith**, one **baptism**, one **God** and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

- a) Notice Paul talks about one body — so, how "one" is this oneness? How is "one" used in this context with all the other "ones" here?

- (1) Is the Spirit splintered? **NO!**
- (2) Is the Christian hope whatever we'd like it to be? **NO!**
- (3) Is there more than one Lord Jesus Christ? **NO!**
- (4) Is there more than one faith, one set of teachings given in Scripture? **NO!**
- (5) Is there more than one Christian baptism for forgiveness of sins? **NO!**
- (6) Is God, the Father, divided? **NO!**
- (7) Then is it possible for the **ONE BODY**, the church to be divided and denominationalized? **NO!**

- b) The body of Christ, the church **MUST** have real unity, not some deceptive union trying to pass itself off as unity

3. **Indeed**, when the Corinthian church was on the brink of denominationalism, dividing over names, Paul told them this:
1 Cor. 1:11-13 — “For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ.” Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”
4. Thus, the answer to the question: “Isn’t there really only one church composed of all the denominations?” ...
 - a) MUST BE NO
 - b) The Bible really does teach that there is only one church

IV. **“Yes,” someone else says, “BUT...” — QUESTION — “ISN’T IT ARROGANT TO CLAIM THAT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS THAT ONE AND ONLY CHURCH?”**

- A. It’s not arrogant if you understand “the church of Christ” to be a **description**, not a denominational name.
 1. The Bible refers to the church frequently, but...
 - a) church of God (Acts 20.28)
 - b) church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15)
 - c) church of the Firstborn (Heb. 12.23)
 - d) churches of Christ (Rom. 16.16)
 - e) the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12)
 - f) Most often just “the church”
 2. But did you notice — **these are not titles**, only as **descriptions** of who it belongs to...
- B. **You see**, any **group** can be the church of Christ, and **anyone** can belong to the church of Christ, who is willing to simply and faithfully be obedient to God’s word, the Bible.
 1. Anyone can **say yes to the Lord** and no their own ways
 2. Any **group** can say yes to the Lord and no their own ways
 3. Starts with faith, repentance, baptism, and discipleship
- C. “But how can you **KNOW** that?”
 1. My religious leader says that he’s right and you’re wrong about baptism, worship, and denominationalism. How will I know?
 2. **Ultimately, you have to add 2 + 2 together and come up with the Bible’s “4”.**
 - a) If one person says it adds up to 5
 - b) and another to 10
 - c) and another to 3
 - d) and another to 4,
 - e) you have you figure it out, that **the answer is 4** — apart from popularity, long time relationship, or what your parents did.
 3. The answer to 2 + 2 is 4.

- a) **Concluding** the truth — about math or religion — is not a popularity contest,
 - b) it is about what's true —
 - c) and what's **in the Bible is true** — Psa. 119:160 The sum of Your word is truth,
- D. You can find out what the Bible says and you can examine yourself as to whether you're doing it
- 1. ...because the salvation things, and moral things, and worship things are not that hard to understand
 - 2. ...because you can know if you're obeying or not
 - a) In how we become Christians
 - b) In how we worship
 - c) In what we believe
 - d) ...and do
 - 3. And you can find out for yourself right in the Bible by asking...
 - a) "What does the Bible say about becoming a Christian?"
 - (1) Read the commands from Jesus, Peter, Paul
 - (2) Read the examples of conversion in Acts
 - (3) Ask: "Have I obeyed this? Does my church do this?"
 - b) "What does the Bible say about worshipping the Lord?"
 - (1) Read of the commands in the Gospels and the letters of Paul
 - (2) Read of the examples in Acts
 - (3) Ask: "Do I do this? Does my church do this?"
 - c) "What does the Bible say about what I should believe and do?"
 - (1) Read of the commands in the Gospels and the letters of Paul
 - (2) Read of the examples in Acts
 - (3) Ask: "Do I do this? Does my church do this?"
 - d) **YOU CAN KNOW**
 - (1) **John** 12:48
 - (2) 1 **John** 5:13
- E. And I might add that any church could also cease to be a church of Christ, if they ceased trying to be faithful to Him
- V. **But someone else asks one more question** — **QUESTION** — **"WHY AREN'T OTHER CHURCHES OK , TOO? WHY COULDN'T I WORK, ASSOCIATE, AND WORSHIP AMONG THEM?"**
- A. **Illus.** — "gentleman"
 - B. **Those not baptized** are not Christians, not part of the Kingdom...
 John 3:3-5 — "Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus *said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you,

unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

- C. If you worship with other groups that may believe but haven't been baptized for forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38) who would you be worshipping with?...
1. ...are worshipping with people who are not yet Christians by God's standard;
 2. ...who haven't been added to the church (Acts 2:47)
 3. ...who are more often than not aren't worshipping God as He commanded
 - a) e.g. instrumental music (Col. 3:16)
 - b) Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor. 11:23ff)
 - c) use of statues (Exo. 20:4)
 - d) pray to wrong things (saints) — 1 Tim. 2:5
 - e) teach error (Gal 1:9,10)
 - f) are more like entertainment than true worship from a true worshipper
- D. Bottom line: No Christian should become part of a denomination

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. The term "church of Christ" is not
1. A sectarian name
 2. Not a denominational name
 3. Not a label as in...
 - a) A "Church of Christ" church
 - b) A "Church of Christ" preacher
 - c) A "Church of Christ" doctrine
- B. It is the biblical description of the body of God's people, who are...
1. ...Obedient to God's commands regarding...
 - a) ...Faith in Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross
 - b) ...Repentance
 - c) ...Confession of Jesus as Lord
 - d) ...Baptism in the name of Jesus for forgiveness of sins
 - e) ...Living the life of a disciple
 2. ...Christians by God's definition
- C. Why the church of Christ?
1. Because, as it is defined by God, it is Christ's church
 - a) Not because I say it is
 - b) Because Lord Himself is claiming it
 2. And the Lord will be returning to bring no other church to Heaven than Christ's own church
- D. In a world where nothing seems so sure or certain, where absolute truth seems to be pretty elusive — YOU CAN KNOW...
1. If you're a Christian and your sins are forgiven
 2. If the church is Christ's church