

# SCRIPTURALLY IDENTIFYING THE LORD'S CHURCH

## INTRODUCTION

Studies and research shows that there are over 35,000 separate and distinct religious denominations in the world today, all claiming to be part of Christendom. This creates a bit of confusion for one trying to be right with God, by finding and being IN the "one" church the Lord established in the first century. If ALL of these denominations 'make up' the ONE church of which the New Testament speaks, **WHY** do they not all teach the "same thing?" Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, but included it's contents to ALL "in every place that call upon Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:2), and then admonished them that they should have "no divisions" among them, but all "speak the same thing." (1 Cor. 1:10). So, the one body (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-13) should be identifiable in the same way, no matter where it meets. If a bakery makes only one flavor pie, there may be many individual pies, but all would look alike and taste alike.

There are several things that will help one identify the Lord's church today, based on these "**same things**" that characterized the church in the first century, that will help one identify that church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that we shall consider at this time.

## DISCUSSION

### I. 1<sup>st</sup>, the SAME SEED.

A. God decreed that "seed" should always reproduce "after it's kind." Gen. 1:11-12

1. In 1983, some seeds were found in a 2,000 year old tomb in China, that were put under boiled and sterilized blankets, and a month later some "tomato" plants began to grow.
2. Wheat seed never produces just **some** wheat, but **only** wheat, but never pumpkins, beans or tomatoes.

B. The SEED of the kingdom of God (the church) is the "**word of God.**" Luke 8:11

1. The word preached on Pentecost day produced ONE ("the) house of God THEN, and will do the same thing today. Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:40-41
  - a. Isaiah said the word would "go forth" FROM Jerusalem where it was first planted.
  - b. The book of Acts tell about how the "word of the Lord" was continually taught.
2. The Author of the seed intended that THIS "seed" be planted into the hearts of men and women in all the world, TILL the END of the world. Matt. 28:18-20
3. We are admonished IN the word to follow only that which it contains. 1 Pet. 4:11; Phil. 3:16-19 (Discuss thoroughly)
4. Paul's "way" was to preach the **same thing** "in every church." 1 Cor. 4:17
  - a. Paul did not teach salvation by "faith only", and by faith and baptism in another.
  - b. If Paul were to appear on earth today, his way would still be to follow Christ wherever he went.
  - c. The church in Corinth **and** those that call upon God in "every place" were to observe the "same thing." 1 Cor. 1:10
5. In the Judgment day, this "seed" (word of God) will determine WHO has obeyed IT, so as to be saved eternally. Matt. 7:21-24, 28-29; Rom. 2:16; John 12:48
6. If "the gospel" saved in the first century, and ONLY "it" could save, **why** change it today, hoping that something else (such as "faith only" or the "sinner's prayer") might be just as good?? Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:15-16
7. Among the 35,000 denominations, there is **much confusion**, and Paul states that God is NOT the author of "confusiion", so such does not meet His approval. 1 Cor. 14:33

### II. 2<sup>nd</sup>, the SAME WORSHIP.

A. The 1<sup>st</sup> century church worshiped according to the TRUTH the apostles revealed. John 4:24; Acts 2:42

1. The early church included edification ONLY from the apostles' revealed word. v. 42
2. This involved the "fellowship" of giving and receiving of funds for the work of the Lord. vs. 44-45; Phil. 1:4-5; 4:15-16; 1 Cor. 16:1-2

3. This worship also involved the “breaking of bread” or the Lord’s Supper. Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-26
4. This worship also included prayer to the Father in heaven. Acts 2:42; 12:5
5. This worship also included the singing of praise to God. Acts 2:47; cf Heb. 12:5; Eph. 5:19; 1 Cor. 14:15
  - a. Their praise did not include patriotic, popular, love or western songs, but only “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.”
  - b. Their praise came from the heart in the form of singing, and not from mechanical music which is not capable of expressing thoughts.

B. IF one looking for the Lord’s church today, and found one religious group that was playing Bingo to raise funds to pay their preacher; OR was playing the piano or organ for man’s enjoyment, OR was teaching doctrines not revealed in the New Testament, and only had a “communion” on certain holidays or at weddings, would he say, “I have found the church of the first century.?”

### **III. 3<sup>Rd</sup>, the SAME NAME.**

- A. Actually, the first century church had no distinct title to distinguish IT from other similar or divisive churches, for there were no such bodies—it was ONE.
1. It was simply referred to as “the church,” “church of the Lord,” “church of God,” and collectively they were known as “churches of Christ.” Rom. 16:16
    - a. This greeting was from “churches of Christ”, plural in number.
    - b. If collectively they were “churches of Christ,” then individually one would be “a church of Christ,” or better still “the church of Christ in *such and such a place.*”
  2. Now, because OF many conflicting religious bodies identified by other names, the term “church of Christ” is generally used to distinguish between the Lord’s church, and human religious institutions who choose to wear special names to honor their founders, or to teach their unique doctrines from their founders or from their conferences.

B. IF one finds a religious body that wears a secular name not honoring Christ, would he say, “I have found the church revealed in the New Testament?”

### **CONCLUSION**

- I. Several years ago, a Baptist preacher in a west Texas town took a vacation with his family, and while in another city decided to attend the church of Christ there, and upon his return publicly made it known that he felt like he was in the first century church.
- II. That first century church is duplicated today, unchanged, where the word of God is taught.