

Churches and Choices

Seekers of truth are faced with a multitude of churches, most of which admit to being denominational: distinct organizations that are kept unique by creed, confession and doctrine. The separation between denominations remains unbreachable as long as contradictions in doctrine exist. Was there ever a time in history that it could be shown that a church free of doctrinal, creedal and confessional divisions existed?

The one who accepts Matthew 16:18 as fact will have no trouble with the preceding question, the answer to which is revealed by the Spirit of God in Acts 2:41-47. Peter preached a crucified and risen Jesus (22-36), to whom all authority for salvation is accorded. Further, we learn that there is none other who can save (4:12). It is Jesus who must be believed (Jn. 8:24), confessed (Rom. 10:9), and obeyed (Heb. 5:8-9). It is Jesus who is the singular head of a singular body, which is his church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:13). It is Jesus in whom all spiritual blessings are found (Eph. 1:3), through whom we have access to the Father (Jn. 14:6), and by whom all will be judged (2 Cor. 5:10). It is by the authority of Jesus Christ that a repentant believer may be baptized unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). (Incidentally, the Holy Spirit deemed it necessary that all the sinners present that day understand that immersion in the name of Christ is unto the remission of sins.) The inspired declaration is that allegiance must be given to Christ (Mat. 10:32-39). The idea that allegiance can be given to any sect or denomination that arose centuries after the Lord established His church on His terms is alien to the Bible (1 Cor. 1:10-13). To this day the inspired words of the Son of God remain steadfast and exclusively authoritative (Mat. 24:35). To say otherwise is to say that there is a law greater than Christ's, when in reality the only other option allowed by God is death (Rom. 6:23; 8:2), an eternal separation from God (1 Thes. 1:8-9; 2 Thes. 2:8-12).

On the Pentecost of Acts 2, three thousand people made the appropriate decision (Acts 2:41), and the Lord added them to the body of those being saved (2:47). As far as the Bible is concerned that is all there is: Those who have been baptized into the body of Christ (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4), and those who remain lost in a world of sin. Jesus shed His precious blood to purchase His church (Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25), which is His body. Who would affirm that the crucified Lord must also be divided? The scriptures affirm but one church from foundation (Mat. 16:18) unto deliverance (1 Cor. 15:24), and but only one way to become a part of it (Acts 2:37-47; 1 Cor. 12:13). "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). The decision is not that difficult.

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