

Finding the True Church

On TV, radio and even in the street, preachers bedazzle their audiences with their smooth words. Many of them are charismatic, skillful orators; some, appealingly youthful and attractive. But, as we have learned, being a Barrack Obama does not necessarily make one a successful President, so how can the young Christian be successful in finding the true church?

Well, the first thing to learn is that the Church is not a building, or even an organisation. Don't be impressed by numbers, wealth or facilities – they are not important!

In fact it is just the opposite, for Jesus Himself told us that very few, not the majority, find the true Church, Matthew 7:13-14, *“Enter by the **narrow** gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it **are few.**”*

He described His people with these words – Luke 12:32, *‘Fear not, **little flock**, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give **you** the kingdom.’* You are more likely to find just a few people meeting together, maybe even just one or two meeting in their own homes, than a hundred or more meeting in a dedicated building, if you are looking for the true Church. Strangely, the exceptions to this can be found in some gentile nations, where God is calling those whose ears *are open* to His message!

Jesus Christ often pictured His church as a virtuous woman. We meet her in the Old Testament in Proverbs 31 and we see that she is exceedingly virtuous, verse 29, *“Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.”*

We learn from Revelation 19:7-9 that the church is referred to as the Lamb's wife, clothed in glowing white garments ,
*‘for the Bride has made herself ready,
Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride **has made herself ready;**
it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure”—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.’*

How has she done this? 2 Corinthians 11:2, *‘For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy, because I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a **pure virgin** to Christ.’* NET.

She has remained a chaste virgin, as we will see later. But first, how are we likely to come into contact with such people? We learn in Isaiah 43:10-11 that they are God's witnesses. Isaiah 43:10-11,
*“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD,
“and my servant whom I have chosen,
that you may know and believe me
and understand that I am he.
Before me no god was formed,
nor shall there be any after me.*

*I, I am the LORD,
and besides me there is no savior.”*

We come to know God and believe Him from the witnessing of others, for He is our Saviour. This is so important to Christians that they can't help but tell others about Christ, about His sacrifice and His message for all mankind. They have actually been commissioned to do so by Christ Himself in Matthew 28:19, *'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'*.

In fact, this verse can be misleading, for in every other mention of baptism *throughout* the New Testament people are to be baptised in Jesus Christ's name alone, so we can know that some scribe added the names of the Father and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2: 38, Acts 8:16, Acts 10:48, Romans 6:3 and Gal 3:27,) Eusebius, AD 260 – 339, the early Church historian, writes, “With one word and voice He said to his disciples: “Go and make disciples of all nations **in my name**, teaching them to observe””

Acts 2:38-39 explains that God calls us to baptism *through repentance*. *'And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”*

Those that God calls begin to recognise the authority of God's word, and their failure to walk in His way. They recognise that sin is the breaking of God's laws, 1 John 3:4, *'Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.'* They learn that the wages of sin is death, Romans 6:23, *'For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'* Only God can call us to repentance – the longing in us to turn away from our sinful ways and seek to please Him, John 6:44, *'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.'* God is the master of family planning. Christ was the *firstborn* of many brethren into God's family but not everyone is being called now. God knows how many He will need to share rulership with Jesus Christ here on this earth during the millennium.

Only with determined repentance will we qualify for forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit, which we receive after baptism through the laying on of hands of a righteous Christian, Acts 8:17, *Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.'*

Neither is baptism just a sprinkling with a few drops of water, but total immersion, so that we are completely buried under the water, picturing the death of our old life and then being raised to a new life of righteousness in Christ, Romans 6:4-5, *'We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.'*

Understanding this is quite different from simply 'believing' in Christ, which is as far as many 'Christians' develop. The tragedy is that Satan has been able to deceive the vast majority, Revelation 12:9, *'And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.'* Mainstream Christianity has taken on the false belief that God's laws, His Commandments, no longer apply. (Read our article 'Checking Your Salvation') They believe they have God's Holy Spirit but they do not, for they do not comprehend true grace, Acts 5:32, *'And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.'* Romans 2:13, *'For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the*

doers of the law who will be justified.'

So, we must recognise that finding the true church is not easy, and these requirements cancel out the majority of Christian denominations. In a way that makes our search much easier, for straight away just *one* of God's ten commandments narrows our search immediately. It is the fourth Commandment, Exodus 20:8-11, *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."* Notice it is the seventh day, not the first, for the change was made by the great false church we read of in Revelation 17:5, and her daughter Protestant churches continued with her error, Rev 17:4-5, *'And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.'* Sadly, most 'Christians' do not recognise that. Most have never even thought about it.

In a way, this commandment is a test commandment because it is so basic. It is one of the Ten Commandments but it is so life changing, because the world does not make it easy. It challenges ones commitment right at the start of our desire to please God. But Jesus said, *"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance"* (Matthew 3:8). If you have the will to obey that command it sets one firmly on the road to the true church, Exodus 31:13, *"You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you.'*

You will find many other requirements in God's word and at each requirement some churches stumble and fall away (See our article 'Checking Your Salvation') which is why so few will make it into the first resurrection. In the end, it is only the ones who follow the instructions in 1 Peter 2:21 who will marry Jesus Christ on the Sea of Glass in Heaven, before returning to the earth with Christ, to share rule with Him, 1 Peter 2:21, *'For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.'*

Revelation 19:7, *'Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;'*

Revelation 14:1-4, *'Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind [Greek: 'from the men'] as firstfruits for God and the Lamb.'*

Revelation 20:4, *'And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.'*

They did not allow themselves to become defiled with the teaching of false churches. They simply follow the words and example of the Lamb and so gradually absorb the teaching of the whole Bible, (diligently studying to avoid its mistranslations etc.) Thus they avoid the doctrines of false churches, (symbolised here as *women*), who ignore those parts of the Bible that do not agree with their leader's beliefs, and so remain spiritual virgins.

There are many churches which have the biblical name *Church of God* (John 17:11, Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 10:32, and Ephesians 1:14-15). Many of them have excellent publications we can learn from if we are prepared to **prove all things** by the scriptures, Acts 17:11, *'Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.'* Often it is only when we *attend* such churches though, that we find their hidden dominion, Matthew 20:25-27, *'But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But **it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:**'*

Sadly, almost all of them stumble at this last fence, which is, in fact idolatry. They attempt to control the beliefs of their members by punishing those who find error in their doctrine, and insist they either keep quiet or face excommunication. The faithful Christian is forced to choose and so will leave to avoid the idolatry of looking to men rather than Christ. Only in this way does he remain a spiritual virgin, *"bought from the men"* by Jesus Christ, as Revelation 14:4 correctly reads.

This choice is not easy. It may mean that you will miss fellowship with others, but that will encourage you, in whatever way you find, to witness to God's words and to your Saviour. However, you will learn that you are never alone, for your husband-to-be will become your constant help and companion.

Strangely, if you find a church claiming to be the one true church, this is a sure sign that it is not, and will display that anti-Christian dominion Christ warned us against. Don't allow yourself to be abused by those who will quote the King James mistranslation of Hebrews 13:17. Closely study the Greek and you will find that it should be translated: *'Assent to the evidence of those that lead you....'* Look for the true church among those who have **no ruler** except Jesus Christ, whose only doctrine is the word of God and a desire to **serve** as Jesus Christ served – preaching the same good news about repentance, baptism and the Kingdom of God, and expounding His words. You may not enjoy as much fellowship with your brethren who are deceived, but you will have found the true church, 1 Peter 2:25, *'For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.'*

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