

## ***Why are there many churches?***

When you drive around a typical, American town you see a variety of religious groups all claiming to follow the Jesus and the Bible. Yet, if they are following the same leader, why are they divided from each other? Many people today are confused, frustrated, and even antagonistic to churches because of this—and for good reason. In fact, Jesus feels similarly. Within a few decades of the spread of the gospel, Jesus told five of His churches that unless they repented He would soon reject them because they were straying from His teachings.

Paul warned Timothy, *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.* (1 Timothy 4:1-3 NKJV). These *latter times* came quickly and have continued as men lied, claimed authority God did not give them, forbade things God did not, and gave commands God did not. The blueprint for many different churches is many different teachings, most significantly, teachings which differ from Jesus' teachings! Man-made teachings result in man-made churches, and Jesus does not tolerate this (Revelation 2-3). Do you?

The Bible is a God-given written record of the original teachings of Jesus and the men He personally trained (Mark 16:15; John 16:12-13). Though the Bible appears long in contrast to a magazine or blog, it is concise when we consider its scope of time and topics. In contrast to the Old Testament, the New Testament has very few specific instructions, so the original teachings are not complicated. Jesus, the apostles, and prophets gave instructions regarding work, families, churches, and our individual lives. There we learn matters God expects, permits, and forbids.

Our duty today is to learn from the Bible what Jesus planned for His churches. We must not add to or remove any of His teachings (Galatians 1:6-9). Is that possible today? Are there people both seeking and doing this? That is the approach of the Chena Small Tracts church of Christ. If you're skeptical or curious, keep reading and see (*see back*).

## ***Jesus' plan for churches***

How would Peter or Paul have answered the question, "What church are you a member of?" If you are a member of a church, would they have answered that question the way you do? One reason we claim to be a church of Christ is because Paul wrote to *the churches of Christ* (Romans 16:16). This is not all that matters but it illustrates the method for unity—Scripture. We are not trying "to be original" but to follow the original, Jesus, in our teachings and practices. Anytime anyone leaves the original, there will be differences and division. Here are some examples:

*The original teaching of Jesus about Jesus* Jesus claimed to be God and Son of God (John 1:1; 10:36). Churches who say Jesus is "a god" cause division by differing with Jesus.

*The original teaching of Jesus about the source of salvation* Jesus said few will be saved and *no one comes to the Father but by Me* (Matthew 7:13-14; John 14:6). Churches participating in unity meetings with Muslims or Buddhists differ with Jesus.

*The original teaching of Jesus about who is forgiven* Here is the simplest way to demonstrate the different modern teachings on this subject:  
Jesus *He who believes and is baptized will be saved*  
(Mark 16:16)

Modern churches *He who is baptized in infancy will be saved and will later believe.*

Modern churches *He who believes is saved and may later be baptized.*

As long as there are many different teachings about Jesus and salvation, there will always be many different churches. Jesus is not pleased with this but neither is He surprised (Matthew 7:21-23). We are not seeking to elevate ourselves but to hold ourselves, and everyone, to the same original plan revealed by God in Scripture.

Do you want to learn more?

Do you have questions?

Contact us or continue learning here:



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