

HOW TO IDENTIFY THE TRUE CHURCH

Text. Jn. 15:1-2 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

INTRODUCTION: Last Week we looked at the dangers to avoid moving the church forward. One danger was false teaching. We discussed the two ways of dealing with the problem. One was to teach against every false doctrine that came along. The other was to focus on the truth. Today we want to do that with the true church that Jesus built.

- A. This is an important matter.
 - 1. There are many religious bodies.
 - 2. Eph. 4:4 says there is only one body (CHURCH). There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;
 - 3. Which is the true church.
 - 4. Some thank God we have different churches.
 - 5. Note Jesus' prayer— Jn. 17:20—21.
 - 6. Not what Paul wanted. 1 Cor. 1:10
- B. Some use Jn. 15:1—2 and say Churches are branches and Christians are the fruit.
 - 1. Read the whole thing Jn. 15:1—8.
 - 2. Could you see a tree bearing all kinds of fruits.
 - 3. Individuals not churches are branches—Jn. 15:5.
- C. The true church is not a denomination or sect.
 - 1. The word sect is used 5 times, in the N.T. same word as heresy which is used 4 times.
 - 2. The Word is never used in a good sense in the Bible.
 - 3. A Christian sect is as improper as Christian heresy.

BODY: HOW DO WE IDENTIFY ANYTHING--CHARACTERISTICS.

- I. NAME.
 - A. Hunting for John Smith—John Jones wrong name.
 - B. The Bible names.
 - 1. Rom. 16:16b ... The churches of Christ greet you.
 - 2. 1 Cor. 1:2a To the church of God which is at Corinth...
 - 3. Heb. 12:23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn
 - C. Find more than one "John Smith" other characteristics must be considered. Same is true with the church.

II. BIRTHPLACE.

- A. Jesus (founder of the church) to be born in Bethlehem-from any other place, an imposter.
- B. If John Smith of Springfield-John Smith of St. Louis wrong man.
- C. Jerusalem birthplace of church.

1. Zeck. 1:16. Therefore thus says the Lord: "I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it," says the Lord of hosts, "And a surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.

2. Isa. 2:2-3. Out of Zion the word shall go forth.

3. Lk. 24:46-47 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

D. One founded in Eden, Sinai wrong one. Must not be "Made in Germany, or Rome or Japan" but in Jerusalem.

III. AGE

- A. If looking for John Smith of 40 years- one of 20 or 60 wrong one.
- B. Man's age reckoned from birth— church from establishment.

1. Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

2. Matt. 16:28 "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

- C. One founded in days of Abraham, John Baptist etc. wrong one.

IV. PROPER FOUNDER- CHRIST. Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

- A. Any founded by Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, John Smith etc wrong ones.
- B. Mary Baker Eddy, any one other than Jesus is the wrong one.

V. PROPER FOUNDATION.

- A. 1 Cor. 3:11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
- B. If founded on experience of men, Holy Spirit, form of government, method or ordinance- wrong foundation.

VI. PROPER LAW.

- A. Law of the U.S. is the Constitution.
- B. Law governing church is the Bible.

- 1. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete,

thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2. 2 Pet. 1:3-4 As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

C. Koran, Book of Mormon, Articles of Religion, church manuals etc all wrong Law.

VII. PROPER METHOD OF BECOMING MEMBERS.

A. Plan of salvation- H.B.R.C.B. added to church—Acts 2:47 Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

B. Cannot “join” church—God’s family—born into it— Jn. 3:5. Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

VIII. PROPER ORGANIZATION.

A. Elders and Deacons.

1. Acts 14:23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

2. Acts 20:17, 28.

3. 1 Tim. 3:1—13.

A. Work done through church 1 Tim. 3:15 But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

B. Not missionary societies, Ladies Aid, etc.

IX. PROPER FORM OF WORSHIP.

A. Prayer- Acts 2:42- And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

B. Singing- Eph. 5:19 Not playing- “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

C. Contribution- 1 Cor. 16:1-2 No pie suppers, etc. “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”

D. Lord’s Supper— Acts 20:7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

CONCLUSION:

A. Baseball has rules.

B. If baseball was not played for 1,000 years and one dug up the rule book could we play ball the right way.

C. Can you be a Christian like the early church. YES!