

WHAT ABOUT "THE CHRUCH"

I *already* know what you're thinking. You're thinking that the editor made a typo in the heading. He was not paying enough attention to catch the mistake. You are thinking about the title of the article should be "What About the Church." Maybe it should, but then again maybe not. I have a few good reasons why I am not planning on changing it.

1. First, although it is not quite the same as the original, it is close. You have to admit that "chruch" looks a great deal like "church." The two words possess exactly the same letters both in type and number. If you just give it a quick glance you would probably never tell the difference. Why change it?
2. Second, accuracy in spelling cannot be counted as important as sincerity of attitude. Anytime I type a heading for an article I sincerely desire to do it the right way. So what if I miss it on occasion or even every time? What difference does it make anyway? Are you telling me that because the word is misspelled that I am wrong and that I have missed the boat? You have to be kidding me.
3. Third, I do not believe that there is only one way to spell the word. Please, I do not want to see the dictionary and no, I do not care to look at the spell check on my word processor. I know what those will tell me. There are too many people out there spelling it differently. I refuse to believe, no matter what the dictionary, says that all of them are wrong. To think so would be naïve and narrow minded.
4. Fourth, just give me the meaning, I do not want the spelling. As long as I know what I am talking about I do not need to spell it properly. Stop telling me that I can not have the definition unless I properly represent the word it is supposed to define. It is not the word that matters but the meaning behind it. Stop being so legalistic!
5. Fifth, I believe that, in actuality, all the letters of the alphabet are in the word "church." You can spell the word however you want. It does not matter. Who are we to judge what letters are in "church" and which ones are not? If I want to spell "church" axwtre" then who's to say I am wrong?

Once again, I know what you are thinking. You are thinking that those are the most ridiculous arguments imaginable for spelling the word "church" in any other way than it is supposed to be spelled. True, the arguments are ridiculous. Yet, don't people make the same type of arguments regarding their understanding of the Biblical concept of the church? Some argue that the organizations of men (Matthew 15:9,13) are not too different than the Lord's church. Yet, when compared with Scripture, there is no comparison (Matthew 16:13-18; Acts 2:1-47).

Others claim sincerity is all that matters in order to please God. True, sincerity is a must if God is to be pleased (Romans 6:17; I Timothy 1:5,18-20). Yet, it is not the only thing that matters (Acts 23:1; I Timothy 1:13-15). Sincerity must be coupled with truth (John 4:24; 8:32; 17:17).

Some argue that God accepts many religious bodies. Yet, the Bible teaches that there is only one body (Ephesians 4:4) which is the church (Colossians 1:16-18). There is only one way for salvation to be enjoyed (John 14:6) and that is in

# THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

the one body of Jesus (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Then there are those who say just give me Jesus but not the church. You cannot have the head without the body (Colossians 1:16ff). They want the Man but not His plan. The Bible doesn't teach such a notion.

Finally, there are those that think that every person who claims loyalty to Jesus is in the universal church. In other words, all the denominations make up the one church of Christ. However, we must ask where the Bible teaches such a thing. In order for that to be correct, we would have to find all the varying denominations mentioned in the New Testament as making up the New Testament church. Sadly, the idea is just not there.

When writing an article, it does matter how you spell "church." And when considering one's relationship with God, it does make a difference as to whether he belongs to the "church of Christ" or merely a "church" founded in the minds of men. Are you a member of the church (Acts 2:38).

-Bill Burk

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### QUESTIONS NEVER ASKED IN THE FIRST CENTURY

There are questions often asked today in the religious world which should concern us. We should be concerned because the asking of these questions indicates a departure from the teachings of the New Testament. These questions were never asked in the first century; therefore, they should not be asked today. Consider a few of these:

**"To Which Church Do You Belong?"** This question is often asked today, but it was never asked in the first century because in that day there was only one church. Jesus promised, "upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). He built his church according to Acts 2:47b: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." To whose church were the saved added? The answer is, they were added to Jesus' church—the only one that existed in that day.

Some take a "Baskin Robbins" approach to their search for a church. Baskin Robbins offers 31 different flavors of ice cream and one may choose the one that best suits him. However, when it comes to the church, should we not choose the only one that is mentioned in the Bible? The only one built by Christ? "To which church do you belong?" is a question that never should be asked today.

**"Who Is The Pastor of Your Church?"** This is another question often raised among denominationalists, but it was never even considered in the first century. The reason being, in that day pastors were elders, not preachers. The Scripture says, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church" (Acts 20:17). Paul called for whom? Did he call for "the pastor?" Absolutely not, he called for "the elders." Why did he not call for "the pastor?" There was no pastor over that congregation or any other in that day; rather, "pastors" - elders or shepherds—a *plurality of them*, were overseers of local congregations. Paul charged these elders, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The denominational pastor system (I.e., one man over a church) is unscriptural. The question, "Who is 'the pastor' of your church?" should never be asked today.

**"Who Plays The Music in Your Worship Services?"** This question was never asked in a first century setting because no one played music in worship services of the Lord's church. Rather, the music in worship was without the accompaniment of an instrument and was a capella (only vocal). The New Testament says to "sing" (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; I Corinthians 14:15). Therefore, to sing "and play" is to add to God's word (Revelation 22:18-19). "Who plays the music in your service?" should never be asked today.

The reason people presently ask these questions is that men have departed from God's word; otherwise, the questions would never be raised. They were not asked in the first century, and therefore they should not be asked today. The only proper situation is to go back to the Bible, to forsake any practice not found therein, and to follow it all our days.

-Mark Lindley

AND ALL THE PEOPLE ANSWERED “AMEN, AMEN”

Truth, to an open mind, is simply too convincing to reject. In fact, truth, in general, has a natural ability to draw the attention of those who hear it. Likewise, once the evidence of truth is clearly explained and confirmed it is natural to accept that truth and abide by it. However, sad as it is, the truth of the gospel does not receive such a generous response. Though confirmed time and time again, it continually is rejected, spurned, and often trodden under foot of man. But is it not strange that the one truth that is self-evident and eternally beneficial is the one that most often is ignored? How could such be the case?

Introduced in Nehemiah 8 is a nation that for centuries had ignored the truth of God's law (Psalm 119:142) and had thus endured a famine of righteousness. Now as they have returned to their homeland by the mercy of God the people came together and not only sought the book of law, but demanded it. Ezra the scribe brought the book, stood at the pulpit prepared for him for this purpose, and read from the law all morning while the people stood out of respect (Nehemiah 8:1-6). Having been without for so long, their thirst for matters spiritual finally overcame their stubbornness and they basked in the glory of the truth. When it was read, its self-evidence was revealed to them, and as one person they cried out in conviction "Amen, Amen" (vs. 6). The power of God's truth cut them to the heart and their response was humble submission.

No longer, though, does it seem that people are willing to respond to the truth with such humility. In fact total rejection of the truth seems to be more normal now than any other response. How far as a society has this world fallen to reject what is so plainly, lovingly, and forcefully declared by the Bible?

Has man suddenly come to reject the truth because truth has become unable to be ascertained? The Bible was written with the intention of man reading it, understanding it, and obeying it, else the stated purpose of this book would be impossible. *"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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (II Timothy 3:16-17). If the Bible cannot be understood then these verses fail on several points. First, since the Bible was written by God's inspiration, if the Bible cannot be understood, then God was ineffective in revealing His will to man. Second, if the Bible cannot be understood, then it is not profitable at all, much less for doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness. Third, the Bible, if not understandable, cannot perfect the man of God; and fourth, it cannot furnish him thoroughly to all good works. The conclusion that the Bible cannot be understood demands these added conclusions. These are ridiculous, therefore so must be the claim.

Has man suddenly come to reject the truth because truth is no longer identifiable? Perhaps the most popular religious view to emerge in the last several decades is the conclusion that there is no standard, objective truth. Many claim truth is relative, therefore what is truth to one may not be truth to another and what is truth to that person may not be truth to anyone else. However, if such is the case then the Bible is not only unreliable, but also misleading. Christ said in John 8:32 that *"ye shall know **the truth**, and **the truth** shall make you free."* This statement affirms a single truth that provides freedom, yet if truth is relative then whose truth is the one. It seems that God would be a respecter of persons to make truth relative and yet say that only one truth will free man from sin. God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34) therefore truth is not relative. There is one truth and it is only that one truth that shall make man free.

Has man suddenly come to reject the truth because truth is no longer appealing? To claim such one must also claim that truth itself has changed and the desires of man have not. Truth was appealing at one time. It was the truth that pricked the hearts of the multitude at Pentecost and led them to obedience (Acts 2). It was truth that convicted Paul and led him toward salvation (Acts 9). It was truth that convinced Cornelius and his household of what they had to do (Acts 10). Truth has not always been unappealing, and seeing that objective truth is by nature unchanging, this cannot be the reason either.

The fact is that truth no longer receives a welcoming reception as it once did not because of any of the reasons listed above, but because man simply no longer wants it. Truth does not fit the desired lifestyle of many in the world and when man's will comes to blows with God's will, man's free choice often is selfish, choosing their own will over God's. Yet in His longsuffering He waits. With hope and expectation He endures. Longing for the day that His creation will grow weary from living in spiritual famine once more. That not only will they ask for the book of truth, but will demand it. That they will respect it for what it is, and that one day upon hearing it read they will not spurn and reject it, but will respond in agreement and reception answering, "Amen, Amen."

-Andy Brewer