

Another One?

The little signs are scattered all along our local roadways. They are nothing new. They just join the many others that have popped up over the last few years. Only the name and some of the content have changed. They are signs for yet another church in town. By my best Yellow Pages count, that will make over 30 "brands" of churches in our county.

Some of these churches are recent in origin. They invite you to "have church at the movies" or to experience "church for those who don't like church," etc.

Others go back several hundred years, their roots sunk deeply in the Reformation, their doctrines being guided by Calvinism. While some of this stripe may be more traditional in their practices, others have sought to adapt their Protestantism to modern day lifestyles and wants. Whichever method of presentation they choose, they are still man-made organizations founded upon false doctrines.

Then there is the church that can trace its roots back beyond the Protestant Reformation, yet not as far back as the New Testament. In fact, it was the impetus for the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther and other reformers sought a "do over" with the Catholic church, much to the detriment of their own lives.

Brand new, one year old, five years old, four hundred years old or a thousand years old; they're all here it seems, each group offering its brand of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, each believing that "all are going in the same direction, just taking different roads," that "everyone is okay as long as they just accept Jesus" and yet each stubbornly refusing to cross over and become one. It's no wonder that adherents to religions such as Islam, Buddhism, etc. mock Christianity. The denominational world has made it appear that Christianity is a patchwork of sometimes radically contradictory doctrines overseen by a confused Deity.

In spite of all of this, there is still one church that can trace its roots back to the first century. There is still one church that bears the stamp of that church of which we read in the New Testament, the one that Jesus established and purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). How do we know that this church exists? We know the same way that we are able to identify any of the various and sundry man-made churches in the area. A church that follows Baptist doctrine is a Baptist church. One that follows the Methodist discipline is a Methodist church. One that follows the New Testament without regard to human traditions and doctrines is..... There's your answer. Anyone can identify the church of the New Testament just as easily as they can identify any of these denominational organizations. Just take a look at the church's founder, the time and place of the church's beginning, the church's organizational structure, the church's worship and the church's practices. Now open up a denominational discipline. Does the church under examination match the pattern in that discipline? If so, then that is a denominational church, man-made to the core. Now open up the New Testament. Does the church under examination provide New Testament authority for what it says and does? If so, then that is the Lord's church. It really is that simple. It just takes some time, some effort and a desire to know the truth in order to distinguish the church that Jesus built from the churches that men have built.

Do we really need another church in town? No, what we need is more of the OLDEST church in town, the one about which we can read in the New Testament. We don't need to put on a circus, turn worship into a sideshow or take a poll and then remake ourselves to satisfy the majority. We just need to teach and live the pure and simple Gospel of Jesus Christ without fear, without compromise and with conviction. The Bible only (the New Testament in particular) makes Christians only. Jeremiah urged the people of his day to return to the Mosaic law from whence they had drifted with the words, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (Jeremiah 6:16). We all need to return to the New Testament and seek the way that Jesus established nearly 2,000 years ago.

Mike Gifford
Gifford7777@yahoo.com