



33. Does the Bible Pinpoint the True Church?

A very popular word today is "ecumenical," which has to do with the joining of different denominations into one world church. The word "catholic" means "universal," and also reflects the conviction many people have that the church ought to be united into "one body."

"Did Jesus intend that His church should be split up into so many different groups? Is He pleased to see His professed followers quarreling among themselves? Does the Holy Spirit produce harmony and unity? Is it arrogant and proud to claim that one denomination is the "true church"? Is the Bible so clear on this subject that any sincere and honest person can find what is the true church today?

Most of us have had the experience of trying to find a missing key for an important lock. Sometimes we try dozens of keys on a ring before we finally discover the one and only key that perfectly matches the shape of the lock and the tumblers fitted inside.

Let us liken the Bible standards for the one true church to a lock created by the Divine Craftsman, who founded His church in the beginning. Can we find the "key"? Where in the world today can we find the church that matches the Bible specifications?

When and How Was the True Church Founded by Jesus?

1. In what simple way did Jesus found His church? John 1:35-45.

ANSWER: "Jesus ... saith ... _____ me."

"With the calling of John and Andrew and Simon, of Philip and Nathaniel, began the foundation of the Christian church. John directed two of his disciples to Christ. Then one of these, Andrew, found his brother, and called him to the Savior. Philip was then called and he went in search of Nathaniel." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 141.

2. What is the true Foundation on which Jesus has built His church? Matthew 16:13-18.

ANSWER: "Upon this _____ I will _____ My church."

What is the "Rock"? It cannot be Peter, for he said that the Rock was Christ Himself (see 1 Peter 2:5-8). Many Scriptures say that Christ is the Rock--Deuteronomy 32:3, 4, 15, 18; 1 Corinthians 10:4; Psalm 71:1-3. Peter means a little stone that can be picked up and thrown around, "petros" in Greek. But the word for "Rock" on which Christ builds His church is petra, which means a great solid outcropping of bedrock.

How We Can Find the True Church

3. In seeking to find the true church, whom do we simply follow? Mark 2:14; Mark 8:34; John 15:13-15.

ANSWER: "He passed by, ... and said unto him, "... whosoever will _____ after _____, let him _____, and take up his _____, and _____." (In other words, follow Jesus' footsteps).

4. Read these verses and then decide if the Lord has a true church in the world: Ephesians 4:4-6.

ANSWER: "There is _____."

When Paul says "there is one body," he means there is one church, because "body" means "church" (see 1 Corinthians 12:27, 28). That one church is worldwide, to be found among "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6, 7).

Of all the different groups on earth who claim to be saints, the Lord pinpoints one group and says, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12). In other words, God's true church will be distinguished by her obedience to His commandments and by her living, powerful faith in Jesus. "Babylon" is a word that means "confusion," and refers to the vast conglomeration of conflicting, quarreling religions that do not follow Christ and do not keep His commandments. "Babylon is fallen" because by rejecting truth she no longer can lead people on the path to heaven.

The History of God's One True Church

5. Please read Revelation 12:1-6 and 12:13-17 and then answer these questions:

(a) What does this "pure woman" symbolize? 2 Corinthians 11:2.

ANSWER: The _____.

(b) What twelve men do the twelve stars symbolize? Revelation 12:1.

ANSWER: The twelve _____.

(c) Who hates the true church? Revelation 12:9.

ANSWER: He is "called the _____, and _____."

(d) What did Satan try to do to God's people for the period of 1260 years? Revelation 12:6, 13.

ANSWER: "He _____ the _____.

This woman is not the Virgin Mary, for this is not literal, but symbolic language. God's church has always been understood as a "woman" (compare Jeremiah 6:2). The 1260 days symbolize years and began in 538 A.D. and ended in 1798 A.D.

6. Now read Revelation 12:17 again. After the 1260 years are ended and we have come to the last days symbolized by the "remnant of her seed," what two things reveal how God has pinpointed His true church?

ANSWER: (a) They "keep the _____ of _____, and (b) have the _____ of _____."

In seeking for the true "key" that fits God's lock of Bible prophecy, we look for a church that keeps the true Sabbath, the seventh day, or Saturday. In pinpointing His true church, the Lord says, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God." This one fact alone will considerably narrow our search. Secondly, we look for a church that has the second characteristic pinpointed here--they have "the testimony of Jesus Christ," or "the Spirit of Prophecy" (see Revelation 19:10). In order for the "key" to fit the lock both characteristics must be evident.

There are churches that claim to keep the seventh day or Saturday but do not have the Spirit of Prophecy, nor do they proclaim the pure gospel of righteousness by faith. And there are churches that claim to have a prophet but do not keep the Bible Sabbath. None of them can fit the prophecy. And of course, the supreme must be evident in the church—Christ-like love.

7. What wonderful experience is to pervade the hearts of God's people in His true church? John 13:34, 35.

ANSWER: "That ye _____ one _____: as I have _____ you." (This word is agape in the original.)

8. What test must be applied to all the teachings of the true church of God? 1 Timothy 3:15.

ANSWER: "The church of the living God," is "the pillar and _____ of the _____."

Applying the Test of the Word

In this brief study we cannot consider all the tests of truth that the true church must meet. But we can look at a few.

The true church:

- (a) Believes the truth of the Godhead (Matthew 28:19, 20).
- (b) Believes that Christ is the eternally pre-existent, divine Son of God (John 1:1-3, 10, 14; Hebrews 1:2; Micah 5:2).
- (c) Believes that man is by nature mortal (Job 4:17; 1 Timothy 6:15, 16).
- (d) Believes that the dead are asleep, unconscious, until the resurrection (John 11:11-14; Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6).
- (e) Keeps the true seventh-day Sabbath as the sign of union and fellowship with the Lord and as a sign of true conversion and sanctification (Luke 4:16; Ezekiel 20:12, 20; Hebrews 4:9, 10, marginal reading; Revelation 1:10).
- (f) Believes that sin and sinners will not continue forever and ever but will come to an end (Malachi 4:1-3).
- (g) Follows God's tithing plan (Leviticus 27:30, 32; 1 Corinthians 9:14; Malachi 3:8-10).
- (h) Follows Christ's example of feet-washing (John 13:1-17).
- (i) Lives healthfully (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17).
- (j) Believes, experiences, and demonstrates salvation and righteousness by faith (Romans 3:20-31; 4:1-25; Ephesians 2:8).
- (k) Believes in the true gifts of the Holy Spirit, the true baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the true gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:1-31, 14:1-40; Ephesians 4:8).
- (l) Follows Christ by faith in His ministry in the Most Holy apartment of the sanctuary in heaven, where He began His ministry of final atonement in 1844 (Daniel 8:14; Hebrews 6 to 10).

9. Where can one find a church that fulfills all of these Bible tests, except the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

YOUR ANSWER: _____.

10. What will enable the true church to complete her work of giving the gospel to all the world in this last generation? John 12:32, 33; 1 Corinthians 1:17, 18; 2:1, 2.

ANSWER: "And I, if I be _____ from the earth, will _____ all _____ unto Me. This He said, signifying what _____ He should _____." "For I determined not to know anything among you, save _____, and Him _____."

"Looking upon the crucified Redeemer, we more fully comprehend the magnitude and meaning of the sacrifice made by the Majesty of heaven. The plan of salvation is glorified before us, and the thought of Calvary awakens living and sacred emotions in our hearts and on our lips; for pride and self-worship cannot flourish in the soul that keeps fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary." *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 660, 661.

11. Is the true church on earth now "perfect"? Philippians 3:12; 1 Corinthians 3:2, 3; Hebrews 5:11-14; 1 Peter 2:1-3; Revelation 3:14-21.

THE OBVIOUS ANSWER: _____.

The true church is not a museum or mausoleum for "perfect" saints. It's a hospital for the healing of sin-sick souls. In fact, no "perfect" person should join the church; he doesn't belong there; he belongs in heaven. Jesus rebukes and corrects His church. Laodicea is the "seventh" or last church of world history, and it is the one that is outstandingly "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked," says Jesus Himself. But He will cleanse and purify Laodicea and prepare her to be His holy Bride (Revelation 19:7-9). That's the work He accomplishes in His final atonement in the Most Holy Apartment of the heavenly sanctuary.

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7 "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

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