

The Church That Jesus Built

The church that Jesus built may be the most misunderstood organization in the world. So many different kinds of churches exist today. Did Jesus build them all? Are they all His churches? Is every one of them doing God's will? Are they all patterned according to New Testament teaching? How can you identify His church in the world today?

If a church possesses different identifying marks than the church in the New Testament, can it be a New Testament church?

Jesus built His church. Let's allow Him to describe His church using His **five** words to guide our study. Jesus said, "**I will build my church.**" in Matthew 16:18. Let's study His blueprint design for the church. Let the Bible speak for itself.

1. I will build my church.

Who is the founder of the church? Who established it?

- Jesus Christ claimed that He would build His church. Matthew 16:18
- He established it through His apostles. Matthew 16:19; 18:18
- If a church has a different founder than Jesus Christ, can it be the church that Jesus built?

2. I **WILL** build my church.

When did Jesus begin His church?

- "I will" in Matthew 16:18 suggests that the church would be founded in the future of Christ's statement.
- Therefore, could it have begun with John the Baptist who died before Jesus said that?
- Did the church begin during Jesus' lifetime? Mark 15:43
- Was the church existing during the lifetime of the apostles? Matthew 16:28; Colossians 1:13; Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; Revelation 2-3
- What group was formed on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after the Lord's resurrection? Acts 2:1,38,41,47
- Where was the church established? Acts 2:5
- If a church was established at a different time than the day of Pentecost in the year of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection and at a different place than Jerusalem, can it be the church that Jesus built?

3. I will **BUILD** my church.

What rock was the church built upon? Matthew 16:13-18

- What was the foundation? 1 Corinthians 3:11
- Was it built upon anyone or anything that was temporary, unstable, or flesh and blood? 1 Corinthians 3:12-13; Matthew 16:17
- Name the rock and chief cornerstone of the foundation of the church? 1 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 2:19-20
- If a church is built by or founded upon Peter or any other human than the Son of God, Jesus Christ, can it be the church that Jesus built?

What building material composed the church?

- The church is not a building, place, or thing.
- The church is blood-bought, born again, redeemed people serving their Savior. Ephesians 2:21-22; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

How do people become members of the church that Jesus built?

- What did the people do who became the original members of the church on Pentecost? Acts 2:37-41
- Did they "join" the church or did God add them to the church? Acts 2:41,47
- What's the difference?
- As immediately and automatically as one meets God's salvation requirements, God adds that person to the church and he or she is accepted into the fellowship of the local congregation of the church.
- If a church has other membership requirements, more or less, (such as signing a card, probation, voting) than required by Jesus, can it be His church?
- Should we demand more or accept less than God requires?

What is the creed, manual, discipline, or rule of faith for the church that Jesus built?

- In what sense is Jesus our creed? Matthew 16:16-18; 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; John 14:6; Matt. 28:18-20
- What is the rule of faith, discipline, or manual that Jesus authorized to guide His church? Romans 1:16; Galatians 1:8-9,11-12; Ephesians 3:3-6; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 Peter 1:3,20-21; Jude 3
- When you teach the New Testament to a person and he obeys, what do you get? A New Testament Christian.
- When you teach the New Testament to a group and they follow it, what do you have? A New Testament church.
- If you teach a man-made creed and it is practiced, what happens? You are creating a man-made religious organization.
- If a creed teaches more than the Bible teaches, it teaches too much.
- If a creed teaches less than the Bible teaches, it teaches too little.
- If a creed teaches the same as the Bible teaches, you don't need it.

How did Christ organize His church body for congregational activity?

- The New Testament church is organized as independent self-governing (autonomous) congregations under Christ.
- Congregations are united in spirit and purpose and voluntarily cooperate in fellowship based upon the Bible.
- No congregation or any other organization should dominate or intimidate a local congregation of the church.
- No earthly headquarters or church hierarchy is taught in the New Testament.

Who does Christ hold responsible for the care of the local congregations?

- Elders/shepherds/bishops with deacons and evangelists serve each local church. Philippians 1:1; Acts 20:17; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9
- Elders or presbyters, shepherds or pastors, bishops or overseers are six terms that synonymously and equally describe the same official capacity and role of a group of congregational leaders. They always occur as a plurality rather than a single congregational leader. The New Testament reveals that these terms are used to describe their role or responsibility. The terms are more of a description of their work than a title.
- The following scriptures show that the six terms refer to the same group of leaders.

- Acts 20:17, 28 – elders, overseers, shepherds (feed)
- Titus 1:5-7 – elders, bishops
- 1 Peter 5:1-5 – elders, shepherds (feed), overseers, (oversight)

Other organizational structure and leadership are not authorized because God specifies what He wants and that excludes other arrangements and other titles for church leaders.

What qualifications are set forth for church elders? 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.

- It would be wrong to impose an additional requirement that is not found in the Bible.
- Likewise, it is not permissible to omit one of the qualifications just to appoint a favorite person.
- Someone recently suggested that some of those qualifications are not as important as others.
- Then why did God list them? God knows best.
- It is not our place to second guess God or try to soften what is stated.

What does the New Testament say about deacons? Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13

What about the:

- preacher - 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:3
- evangelist - 2 Timothy 4:5; Ephesians 4:11
- minister - 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:2

How should preachers be treated?

- Do not elevate them. Acts 14:11-18; Matthew 23:5-12; Psalm 111:9
- Do not degrade them. 1 Timothy 4:12; Romans 10:15
- Provide support for their good work. 1 Cor. 9:1-14; 2 Cor. 11:8-9; Galatians 6:6; Philippians 4:16-18

What about "located" preachers? Acts 18:11 - Paul in Corinth 18 months; 19:8-10 - Ephesus 2+ years; 20:17-31 - Total of 3 years; 1 Timothy 1:3 - "remain".

Why are teachers held in high esteem in the church? Acts 13:1; Romans 12:7; Ephesians 4:11

How can ministering members complete the organization of the church? Romans 12:3-18; 1 Corinthians 12

4. I will build **MY** church.

Who does the church belong to? Whose church is it? Matthew 16:18

- Who is the husband of the bride of Christ? Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:23-32
- Who bought the church with His own blood? Jesus Christ. Acts 20:28
- Who is the head of the church? Jesus Christ is the head of the church. Ephesians 1:22-23; Col. 1:18
- That excludes anyone else who claims to be the head of the church including famous church leaders of modern day denominations.
- Are churches with anyone at their head other than Jesus Christ really honoring Him?

Where is the headquarters of the church?

- Jesus is now reigning from His headquarters in heaven over His earthly kingdom, the church. Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 15:23-25
- Are churches who report to headquarters on earth following the pattern of the church that Jesus built?

What is the church called in the New Testament?

The New Testament church is described with the following terms:

- church (most commonly used) - Acts 2:47; 8:1; 11:26; 12:5; 14:23,27; 15:3,22; 18:22

- churches of Christ - Romans 16:16; Matthew 16:18
- church of God - Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2
- body of Christ - Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:23
- bride of Christ - Revelation 21:2,9

Why is it important to carefully use only New Testament descriptions of the church? Acts 4:12

Describing the church in any other way than what is found in the New Testament is adding to the Word of God and is not authorized by Him. Modern churches which were started after the first century were often named after their founder, methods, or doctrines rather than the Biblical descriptions.

What are individual church members called?

- Christians - Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16
- disciples - Acts 11:26; 20:7
- saints - Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1
- brethren - Acts 6:3; Galatians 6:1
- children - Romans 8:16; Galatians 3:26
- These are names or descriptions of individuals. They are not terms or names describing the church.
- When religious people use descriptions other than New Testament terms, are they substituting something in place of what God chose?

5. I will build my **CHURCH**.

How many churches did Jesus build?

- Did Jesus use the plural or singular for church in Matthew 16:18?
- Jesus prayed for unity that they all might be one. John 17:20-21
- How many bodies did Paul's plea for church unity call for? Ephesians 4:3-4
- How many bodies may we choose in which to be baptized? 1 Corinthians 12:12,13,20
- How does God view religious division, sects, and denominationalism? 1 Corinthians 1:10-13
- The New Testament church is not denominational. Ephesians 4:4 says there is "one body" which is the church according to Paul in Colossians 1:24. The New Testament teaching of the one church is in sharp contrast to modern day denominations and community churches.
- If a church is simply one of 100s of man-made denominations, can it be the church that Jesus built?

Think about it

Jesus said, "I will build my church."

The church that Jesus built is distinctly different from many religious groups existing today.

We must follow the **approved examples** of the New Testament church in order to be a New Testament church.

Are you dedicated to the purpose of restoring the teachings, organization, and activity of the church revealed in the New Testament?

Will you constantly search the Scriptures to discover the identifying marks that characterize the church?