

From Where I Sit . . .

“What Is The Church To You?”

I asked a student to give me her perception of the Church of Christ, not for the purpose of evaluating whether she thought it was a good church or bad church, a friendly church, a prejudiced church. Rather I was interested in seeing who she perceived us to be. What is our mission? What makes us different from, say, any of many churches down the street?

You see, many have views about “church” and “religion” that are shaped by human experiences, whether good or bad, and often our perceptions are not altogether what God had in mind for the church to be. None of us are God, and shouldn’t pretend that we can see things from His perspective. After all, He can see the past, present and future as if they were all right before Him. He alone knows the depth of feeling He has about His plan, His church. You and I must rely on that which He has told us through revelation.

From a purely Bible perspective, the church is about relationship: with God, with Christ, with the world, with one another. The “called out ones” or the “ecclesia” of God are called into a relationship with Him and His Son in which we are separated from the world of sin and brought into the warmth of heavenly fellowship (**1 John 1:7-9; 2 Peter 1:4**). Submissive, obedient, believers, are brought out of darkness into the marvelous light of His eternal Kingdom (**Colossians 1:13**) and there we exist as the family of God. God saves man and adds him to a universal family of believers known as the church.

This church existed in the mind of God from eternity, but became a reality in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost after Jesus went back to Heaven. One can read about it’s birthday in **Acts Chapter Two** when the very first believers were added to the church which Jesus had declared He would build (**Matthew 16:18**). This church has existed ever since. She has been battered, distorted, parts of her have gone into total apostasy and don’t even resemble her in her innocence, simplicity, and purity. But the church that Christ built lives on. It didn’t have to be built again.

Man has done terrible things to that church and in the name of that church. These distortions of what God designed have caused many to not have a good perception of what the church is. To most, it’s a chopped up badly divided bunch of religious people who can’t see anything alike and prefer each to do it his own way. None of this sounds very Biblical.

To God, it’s revealed as a united body of believers who speak the same thing, who share “*like precious faith*” (**2 Peter 1:1**) and who assemble in congregations around the world but are all really just One body (**Ephesians 4:1-4**). That church came into existence in **Acts Chapter Two**. That’s the church as I see it. There is a vast difference between God’s plan for the church and what man has made it. The great architect and designer must be in dismay as He looks down on the miserable mess man has made of religion.

I am a member only of the church that Jesus said He would build and to which the Lord added those very first obedient believers in **Acts Two**. I am not a member of any manmade movement of religion. I am just a Christian. I only seek to worship with those who will lay aside manmade doctrines and dogmas, and embrace the Word of God for full authority for all we do in worship and in work. We can be of “*like precious faith*” in this great fellowship with any and all who will walk by the same counsel of God. Indeed there is One Body, and it is not to be divided. It is not good that we have “the church of our choice.” Jesus didn’t found “**the church of my choice**” but of His choice, His body of saved ones separated out of the world for fellowship with Him. What is the church to you?

. . . Terry Broome

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