**THE MODEL CHURCH: ORIGIN, STRUCTURE, NAME, AND DOCTRINE**

**ORIGIN**

Man says: There is a time, place, and founder for each denomination and church:

* 1520 A.D. Germany – Martin Luther – Lutheran
* 1534 A.D. England – Henry VIII – Episcopalian
* 1536 A.D. Switzerland – John Calvin – Presbyterian
* 1607 A.D. Holland – John Smythe – Baptist
* 1729 A.D. England – John Wesley – Methodist
* 1830 A.D. United States – Joseph Smith – Mormon
* 1872 A.D. United States – Charles Taze Russell – Jehovah Witness
* 1914 A.D. United States – Charles Harrison Mason & others – Assembly of God
* 1950 A.D. United States – Conference of men/current president Dr. William Hamel – Evangelical Free Church of America

God says: The time, place, and founder of His church:

* 33 A.D. (Day of Pentecost) Jerusalem – Jesus Christ via His apostles – The Kingdom/Body/Church of Christ (**Matthew 16:18, Acts chapter 2, Ephesians 2:19-22**)

**ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE**

Man says:

* A Denomination (D) is made up of churches © recognized within that denomination
* That the Lord’s Kingdom is made up of many denominations (D). The idea is to “join the church of your choice”; just chose the one that fits you because they are all acceptable to God! “No matter what church you belong to, we are all God’s children!”
* We must add to the organization and structure of the church. Examples include modern day apostles, presidents, one reverend or pastor over a church, arch bishops, cardinals, one man overseeing many churches, governing bodies such as conventions, councils, synods, or central headquarters that oversee all the churches of that denomination, etc.
* It is necessary to add man-made writings along with the Bible because the Bible was written for times long ago. “Things have changed and the church must change as well.” Many denominations have manuals, disciplines, procedures, and creeds of man they are to follow.

**Satan has three basic desires (Mark 4:14-19): To STOP you from becoming a Child of GOD (verse 15); To PULL you back into the world of sin (verses 16-17); and to MAKE you FRUITLESS (verses 18-19). *What better way to deceive people than to tell them that they can make a CHOICE from the CHURCHES OF MEN?***

God’s says:

* The Lord’s Kingdom/Church/Body is made up of individual Christians who worship with other Christians in local assemblies (**Acts 6:7, 8:1, 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14**).
* Christians are added by the Lord to His Kingdom/Church/Body (**Acts 2:47, 1 Corinthians 12:13**)!
* All members of the Lord’s Body answer to Jesus as their Head **(Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:18**). Jesus has all authority (**Matthew 28:18, 1 Peter 3:22**). There is no other organization except Christ.
* Local churches are made up of saints (i.e., Christians), elders (i.e., bishops, overseers), and deacons (**Philippians 1:1**). These are shepherded by the elders who only have authority over the local congregation they are a part of and must be accountable directly to the Chief Shepherd (**1 Peter 5:1-4**).
* No doctrine other than the doctrine of Christ (**2 John 9**). The church upholds, defends, and proclaims the Truth (**1 Timothy 3:14-15**).

**The difference between the Lord's church and denominations today is that individual Christians make up the universal church / body / Kingdom. The Kingdom is not made of up different groups of man.**

**NAME**

Man says:

* Names are not important.
* A church can be a name not found in the Bible
* Churches have titles that represent what doctrines and disciplines they claim. For example: St. John’s Episcopal Church, Peace Lutheran Church, 1611 King James Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, First Presbyterian Church, Kingdom Hall of Jehovah Witnesses in Oak Ridge, Cokesbury United Methodist, Faith Promise Church, Hickory Grove Feet Washing Baptist Church, Community Church, etc.
* All churches that claim to believe in God are good. The belief is that there are many different paths to Heaven.

**Jesus disagrees (Matthew 7:13-14, 21-24, John 14:6).**

God says:

* The name of church of Christ for a local congregation is not a title but rather a way to describe these groups of Christians meeting in local congregations (**Romans 16:16**).
* Other Bible terms that describe these local congregations are church of God (**Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 10:32, 11:16, 22, 15:9, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:13, 1 Thessalonians 2:14, 2 Thessalonians 1:4, 1 Timothy 3:5**), the churches of a region (**Galatians 1:22, Revelation 1:4, 11**), and the church at a specific city or place (**Acts 11:22, 13:1, Romans 16:1, 5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15-16, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:1, Philemon 1:2, Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18, 3:1, 7, and 14**).
* Many of these references, when taken in the full context, are referred to as belonging to Christ.
* Christians of a local congregation can sin (**Revelation 3:1**) and put themselves in an unsaved condition. In the NT we read of Christians being encouraged to repent of their sins and being warned because they may lose their souls eternally.
* **Revelation 2:5** shows that a local congregation can lose its lampstand and no longer be recognized by the Lord as belonging to Him.

**DOCTRINE: *WHAT MUST ONE DO TO BE SAVED?***

Man says:

* Religious division is acceptable. They call it “religious diversity”.
* Join the church of your choice.
* One needs to have a salvation or confession experience.
* Baptism is not to save but only an outward sign of the salvation you have already received.
* You can call on the name of the Lord with a sinner’s prayer, by accepting Jesus into your heart, or by simply having a warm feeling that you have been saved.
* As long as you are a member of a church or denomination, you are in a saved condition.

God says:

* He wants all believers to be united with each other and with Him (**John 17:20-21**). Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, commanded that there be **NO** divisions (**1 Corinthians 1:10**).
* Hear and Learn (**John 6:45, 17:3, Romans 10:17**)
* Believe (**John 6:29, 8:24, Hebrews 11:6**)
* Repent (**Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19, 17:30**)
* Confess the Lord (**Matthew 10:32-33, Romans 10:9-10**)
* Be Baptized (**Acts 22:16, Galatians 3:26-27**)
* Continue to grow in the Word and the Lord (**Acts 17:11, 2 Tim. 3:14-17, 2 Peter 3:17-18**)

**CONCLUSION:** The Bible shows us that the choice has already been made by God. We should not join the church of OUR choice but the church of God's choice. The one church we read about in the New Testament is composed of obedient, baptized, believers who are added to the church by the Lord (**Acts 2:47**).

If we want to go **UP** to Heaven we must be a part of the Body of Christ (**1 Thessalonians 4:16-18**). If we can help you this morning, please make your wishes known as we stand and sing.