

It's always been interesting and confusing to me that Christian denominations all teach and practice things different from each other. Interesting, because the differences mostly revolve around what has suited men instead of what suits God. Confusing, because the differences mostly revolve around what has suited men instead of what suits God. (Shouldn't we be more concerned about what pleases God instead of ourselves?) Although churches today may claim to serve the same God, believe in the same Jesus and be on the same quest to spend eternity in heaven, they each go about it in different ways, teaching varieties of doctrine and worship. At the same time most all of their members will agree that "one church is as good as another". If that's true, just how much different can one be and still be as good as another? Shouldn't we be asking, "What church pleases God?"

In Matt. 16:18, the words "My church" denote singular tense, meaning that Jesus' 'church' is singular in context. That being said, how is it that the many and varied denominations can make up the "one church" that Jesus built? Is Christ the head of many bodies? (ref. Eph. 1:22-23) I've heard it said over and over that as long as one is sincere of heart and believes in Jesus, that it doesn't matter what church one is a member of, because "we're all going to the same place, but taking different paths to get there". While that may be true of taking a road trip, I don't believe it works the same when it comes to finding our way to heaven. But, then again, it really doesn't make a difference what I believe or think, it's what God's word says on this subject or any subject that really matters.

So, beginning in Acts 2, with the establishment of the church in Jerusalem, and searching the books and verses from there through the end of Jude, we will find certain qualities or characteristics that identify the Lord's church, the one He died for and the one that should still please God today.

The church met on the first day of the week and celebrated the Lord's Supper each first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Every church had elders or shepherds (Acts 14:23). There was no hierarchy of rulers or a popery in the church. Deacons in each church took care of the physical needs (Acts 6:3; Phil. 1:1; etc.) On the first day of the week they gave of their means to the Lord as they had prospered and purposed in their hearts (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7). They sang psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). This was their manner of life. (a cappella means "as the chapel", or "as the church" and also singing without mechanical instruments). Folks were baptized in order to have their sins forgiven and to be saved (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-6; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21). The Lord added them to His church as they were being saved (Acts 2:47).

Paul was pretty precise when he wrote, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all", (Eph. 4:4-6). Notice that he said one body, not multiple bodies teaching different things. He also said one faith (doctrine), not varieties of faiths (doctrine) that suit men. He said one baptism (must mean water baptism as this is how sins are forgiven, Acts 2:38). He said one God and Father of us all. Worship of multiple gods was and still is worthless. These "ones" are specific to the New Testament church that belongs to Jesus who gave His life for her. Although not exhaustive, surely this goes a long way to describe the church that pleases God. Shouldn't we strive to be the same church? If this doesn't describe the church you attend, what will you do; nothing, or seek to please God?