

Many Churches, Much Confusion

I write these words on Saturday afternoon, thinking of all of the preparations being made at this moment for Christian worship services that will take place tomorrow morning. Catholics, Methodists, Lutherans, Baptists, Episcopalians, Independents and many other flavors and varieties of Believers will be gathering once again tomorrow ... Sunday ... on what is widely viewed to be the "Christian Sabbath."

I think of the many wonderful works that churches take part in. The recent hurricanes in Florida resulted in churches opening their doors to the temporary homeless and distributing food to the needy. Help is often sent to Believers living in poverty in places like Haiti. Churches provide comfort to families who have been devastated by the death of a loved one.

But along with these good works we have seeds of confusion being planted everywhere by "The Church." Tomorrow morning many different kinds of churches will meet, doing some good but breeding much confusion.

There is really only one church! The Greek word in Scripture is "ecclesia" which means "called out ones." The ecclesia ... the one true church ... is comprised of every Believer, having been "called out" from the total population to comprise "the church." There is no membership vow to be taken, no creed to be observed, no covenant to be signed, and no tithe that is required. These things all stem from the traditions of men, and not from the Word of God. Creeds, covenants and membership vows are all ways for men to influence other men to believe the same way they do. But creeds, covenants and membership vows differ drastically from one church to the next. They cannot all represent the correct interpretation of God's Word!

Tomorrow morning once again preachers will preach with great certainty, and Sunday School teachers will share their expert knowledge of the Scriptures with their classes. But think of all of the differences in these teachings!

- To be baptized one must be an adult
- Children may be baptized
- Proper baptism involves complete immersion
- Baptism by sprinkling is sufficient
- Water baptism is a requirement for salvation
- Water baptism is no longer necessary today

This is just one small issue! Think of the multitudes of other issues being taught in significantly different ways by the many different churches of our day. And every teacher standing before a class, and every preacher standing before a congregation, and every professor standing before a seminary class, and every

author writing commentary on the Bible ... all think they are dead right, and all other viewpoints dead wrong.

Wait just one minute!

"For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ's sake, 'Be conciliated.'" (2 Corinthians 5:20)

If we, as the church (the "called out ones") are ambassadors entreating to the world as if God were entreating thru us ... shouldn't we all be bearing the same message? Shouldn't the message we proclaim be God's message, and not our own concoction?

Most every church that gathers tomorrow will say they believe the Bible is God's Word. Then why so many different and confusing teachings? It is because churches and preachers and teachers today are following after the traditions of men more than the Word of God. They have been "indoctrinated" into a certain system of Bible interpretation, and they go out into the world to perpetuate that same interpretation ... indoctrinating others.

"Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

We must each of us take heed of this truth. We are not to just hear what a preacher or teacher has to say, but we are to be as the Bereans, who received the words of Paul with eagerness, but who then examined the scriptures to see if his words were true (Acts 17:11).

Reformation is needed in the church today more than ever. Traditions of men are in firm control, and any who would see things to be in error when studying the Word of God are not long welcomed by the church that is challenged. If preachers or teachers or professors began to proclaim truth from God's Word that varied from their church or institution, they would be asked to be silent or leave. Faithful preachers would lose their jobs. Each church and institution has already shaped their theology ... their interpretation of God's Word ... and there is no room for the rogue Believer who would present a challenge.

Many different churches, denominations, institutions ... all believing they are dead right ... indoctrinating as many as they can into their "system" of theology. But they cannot all be right, and very obviously many of them are wrong.

So once again tomorrow morning many churches will meet, and those who gather in the pews will think the message and the teaching they are hearing is pure 100% truth, because they are hearing it from the experts.

Whether you will be in a church tomorrow morning or not, the challenge is the same if you are a part of the one true church ... the ecclesia ... the Body of Christ.

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- Bob Evely -