

WHY SO MANY CHURCHES?

Have you ever noticed all the variety in nature? There are thousands of different kinds of flowers, trees, birds and animals! And people too! With the exception of identical twins, it's rare to find any two people who look alike. But there's one area where variety might not be so good, and that involves the question of why are there so many different churches?

You might say, isn't that good? Not everyone likes the same kind of church. There's a common view that all religions just provide different paths to the same God. But how can this be true when the teachings of different religions are often totally opposite of each other?

The problem is not that there are so many roads. No, God tells us clearly which road to take. The problem is that the road God tells us to take is not the smoothest nor the most popular. That's why Jesus said: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life." (Matthew 7:13, 14)

KEY POINTS

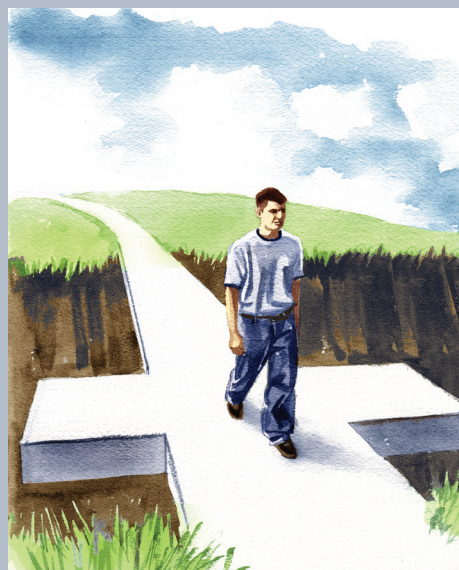
Jesus said the true way is narrow. He doesn't say the "ways" leading to life are narrow. Maybe He is referring to different religions other than Christianity? What about within Christianity itself? Sure, there are lots of different denominations, but don't they all teach the same thing about Jesus? Good question. Let's see how God answers that question: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8, 9)

For example, some churches say that in order to receive forgiveness for our sins, we need to confess our sins to a priest; others say we don't need a priest but can go directly to God. Both can't be right. Some churches baptize believers by sprinkling, others by complete immersion.

Some baptize babies, others have children wait until they are older and can decide for themselves. Yet the Bible says there is "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." (Ephesians 4:5) As you can see, they can't all be right.

Some say that after the cross, the Sabbath was done away with. Others believe it's still God's will for His people to observe it. Both can't be right. Some people believe the dead are unconscious when they die (Eccl. 9:5), while others believe when you die you keep on living, either in comfort or in agony. Both can't be right. How do we know which one to choose? How can we find the church with God's truth for this time? God gives us a wonderful promise: "I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go." (Psalm 32:8)

The God of heaven is not influenced by popular opinion. He simply tells us, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matthew 24:14) What is that gospel message? First, we find in the New Testament a call to worship the Creator God. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible... all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Colossians 1:16, 17)



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"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world."

Second, the New Testament clearly indicates that the Ten Commandments are to be obeyed. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” (James 2:11, 12) And again, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” (1 John 5:3)

Third, included in our obedience to the Ten Commandments is the Sabbath commandment that points to God as Creator. Look at what Jesus said: “For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” (Matthew 12:8)

So we see that God’s message for the world is salvation by accepting Jesus as our Savior. Then, from a grateful response of love to our Lord, we are called to obey His Commandments. So how can we recognize God’s last church? By the message it presents.



God’s church loves Jesus and keeps His commandments.

First, it must emphasize the gospel, the good news of salvation by faith in Jesus’ Sacrifice. Second, it must call men and women to worship only one God, the Creator. (Revelation 14:7) Third, both in the Old and New Testaments, God’s people are to keep His Ten Commandments.

And, fourth, at the heart of the Ten Commandments is the Sabbath commandment, the one commandment that points to God as our Creator.

Talking specifically about God’s people in the last days, the Bible describes them this way: “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” (Revelation 14:12) So, which church would God have us be a part of in these last days? First, I would look for a church that was preaching the everlasting gospel and one that called people to worship the Creator God both as Savior and Lord. Worshipping Jesus as our Lord means we submit our will to Him and obey Him because we love Him. Directly linked to that, I would look for a church that was depicted in Revelation 14:12 as those “who keep the commandments of God” and have faith in Jesus. And when you find that church, may I suggest that you will have found God’s remnant people for this hour in earth’s history. And with all the conviction at my command, may I suggest that you have found that church at the meetings you have been attending.

Welcome home, my friend!

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

The Lord is clear about those that will make up His final people. They have two overarching characteristics: They love Jesus and keep His commandments. They keep all of His commandments, including the Sabbath commandment. We are called to join together in Christian fellowship and be part of the Body of Christ, His church. Make a decision to follow Jesus wherever He leads you.

BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

Don’t expect that the church that loves Jesus and preaches the everlasting Gospel to the world and keeps all of His commandments will be the most popular one in your neighborhood. The issue for us is not to follow the crowd. Rather, it is to follow Jesus and His Word, the Bible. Won’t you choose to be a part of Christ’s last day, commandment keeping people?