

A STUDY OF FIVE IDENTIFYING MARKS OF A TRUE CHURCH

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But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (1Ti 3:15)

Five identifying marks of a true Church:

1. The ordinance of Baptist baptism

- a. Not for salvation (Jesus our high priest was without sin and didn't need salvation) Heb 4:15 says, *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."*
- b. Baptist Baptism is sent by God through John the Baptist
 - i. John 1:33 says, *"And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."*
 - ii. Baptist baptism administered with authority fulfills righteousness! In Mt. 3:15, Jesus told John that He must be baptized by him to fulfill all righteousness.
- c. Baptist baptism has AUTHORITY from God. Lk. 3:23 tells us Jesus was about 30 years old when He walked more than 60 miles to be baptized of John the Baptist. Mat 3:13
 - i. **Matthew 21:23-27**, *And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? (24) And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. (25) The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? (26) But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. (27) And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."* John the Baptist had authority from heaven!

- ii. Our Lord's churches received authority to baptize from Jesus. **Mat 28:18-20**; & (John 20:21) "*...as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*" And Jesus was sent with authority!
- d. Baptist baptism has the correct **mode** & pictures death, burial & resurrection
 - i. John the Baptist buried Jesus in the waters of baptism. Matthew 3:16-17 "*And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: (17) And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" God the Father was pleased with Jesus' obedience, the baptism's method and the authority of the administrator
 - ii. Baptism pictures death, i.e., dying to self, burial & resurrection to newness of life in Christ. **Rom. 6:3-7**
- e. Jesus' baptism signaled John the Baptist's decrease. Jn 3:30 & foreshadowed the fact that only saints with Baptist baptism are to be a members of the Lord's church
 - i. Baptist baptism is the doorway to membership into one of the Lord's churches. **Act 2:41** confirms this truth, "*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*" That was on the first day of the week, which we know as Sunday.
- f. Baptist baptism requires a **proper candidate**
 - i. The first act of obedience, after being saved should be Baptist baptism.
 - ii. **Act 8:35-37**; "*... If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest...*"

2. Jesus Christ is the head of a true church (**Eph 5:23; Col 1:18**)

- a. Jesus started His church & earthly ministry, decently and in order by first receiving Baptist baptism in the river Jordan.
 - i. If you're saved you have been called to service and you're first act of obedience before embarking upon public ministry should be to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in obtaining Baptist baptism. Remember Jesus walked more than 60 miles for a holy, heaven sent Baptist baptism.
- b. Secondly, Jesus demonstrated that "*...the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*"

- i. *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.* (Mt 4:1) 40 days. (Lk 4:2; Mk 1:13)
 - ii. Satan tempted Jesus by wresting scripture. 1st Lust of flesh 2nd Lust of eyes 3rd Pride of life You will be tempted the same way!
 - iii. Jesus quenched all the fiery darts of the wicked with the shield of faith. This is for our admonition!
- c. After being tempted Jesus returned to Bethabara beyond Jordan where John was baptizing & starts calling those that will be charter members
- i. Jesus' first publically recorded words after being baptized were *"What seek ye?"*
 - ii. He says to two of John's disciples *"Come and See."*
 - iii. Then Jesus begins calling disciples from people made ready and prepared for the Lord by the authority vested in John the Baptist. (Jn. 1:38-48; Lk. 1:17)
 - iv. These will be charter members and apostles in the church He will build. (Mt. 16:18)

3. The message Jesus taught and commanded to be preached.

- a. The first mention of Jesus, preaching in Mathew is 4:17. The message He was preaching was, *"Repent: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand."* Mathew 4:23 tells us Jesus went about all Galilee, *"Preaching the gospel of the kingdom."* In Mt. 10:7 Jesus commanded His disciples, *"as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."*
- b. The first mention of Jesus preaching in Mark is in Mk. 1:14 & 15, where Jesus preached, *"the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."*
 - i. The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are not two disparate gospels but are parallel with each other. Furthermore, by examining the scriptures it appears Jesus preached the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God in the same message.
 - ii. Jesus began teaching those He called, the message to preach in His churches. That message was the gospel of the kingdom is at hand as found in Mt. 4:17, 23; 9:35; 10:7; & 24:14.
 - iii. **Mt. 25:1-13** exemplifies the message to be preached (the kingdom of heaven is likened unto ten virgins)
 - iv. There is debate about what these ten virgins represent but it is very clear, His church is to preach the message **BE READY FOR THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH THE KINGDOM IS AT HAND.**

- v. The kingdom of God is at hand is taught in Mk. 1:14 & 15; Lk. 8:1; 16:16; Acts 2:42; & **8:12**.
- vi. Look what Paul told an assembly of preachers in **Acts 20:25-30** *Paul preached the kingdom of God*
 - 1. warned about grievous wolves AKA preachers who allow anything to gain a few warmer/preacher follower
- vii. **1Th 1:8-10**, demonstrates what Paul was preaching in Acts 20:25 concerning the kingdom of God
- viii. Jesus taught about the kingdom of God/heaven Jn. 14:1-6.

4. The pattern our Lord instituted for doing missionary work.

- a. Jude warns us of those that go the way of Cain. What was the way of Cain? HE DID IT HIS WAY!
- b. Jesus' church is to be propagated according to the pattern He taught and demonstrated.
 - i. Jesus sent forth missionaries two by two See **Luk 10:1-4 & 9** Lk. 9:1-5 tells us the same thing
- c. In Acts 13:1-3 we read that the Church at Antioch sent Paul & Barnabas forth according to the pattern our Lord established
 - i. The sending church is to follow up and confirm the work. See **Jn. 4:4, 24-25, 34-38; Acts 15:35-41**(Paul & Silas went confirming the churches); 1 Thes. 1:8-10 (The Holy Spirit saw fit to have Paul write of confirming their doctrine)

5. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper its purpose and ingredients

- a. The Lord's Supper is not for salvation and it is not a sacrament.
- b. The ordinance is to be done in remembrance of Christ (1 Cor. 11:23-25; Lk 22:19)
- c. unleavened bread is an ingredient of the Lord's Supper
 - i. Exodus 12 describes the first Passover and it tells us they had unleavened bread.
 - 1. The unleavened bread represents Christ's sinless body that was broken for us. (Mt. 26:26; Mk. 14:22; Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:24)
- d. Wine is the correct ingredient for the Lord's Supper. How do we know, Scripture, history & common sense!
 - i. According to scripture, our Lord instituted the Lord's Supper at Passover (Mt 26:17-19 Mk 14:12-16; Lk 22:7-15)

- ii. From scripture, we learn that the drink is representative of the precious sinless blood that was shed at Calvary. (Mt. 26:28; Mk. 14:24; Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25)
- iii. History tells us Orthodox Jews have used wine at Passover for thousands of generations.
 - 1. To celebrate Passover Orthodox Jews use wine labeled Kosher for Passover. Therefore, wine would have been the fruit of the vine that Jesus said to *“Drink ye all of it.”*
- iv. History also tells us that the use of wine for the Lord’s Supper diminished with the women’s temperance movement and prohibition
- v. Common sense demonstrates that natural fermentation turns grape juice into wine. Jam. 1:15 tells us that *“sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”* so the leaven, a symbol of sin, when it is finished working is dead and there is no more leaven and no more work of sin.
 - 1. The ancients did not have a way to preserve grape juice without fermentation.
- e. There are those that say if a church has one ingredient of the Lord’s Supper wrong they are off by 50%. I used to think that too but I now recognize that their supper is 100% polluted and following the way of Cain.

The identifying marks we looked at were; 1) Baptist baptism 2) The head of the Church is Jesus Christ 3) The message is the one our Lord preached, taught and commanded to be taught 4) Missionary work is done according to the pattern instituted by our Lord & 5) The purpose and ingredients of the Lord’s Supper.

The Lord’s Church is the only church that Jesus commanded to baptize and teach all things. As the pillar and ground of the truth, the Lord’s Churches should endeavor to do all things according to the scriptures and not excuse error because the Corinthian church was still a church despite their error. Surely you recognize 1st Corinthians is a letter of rebuke. Churches that do not follow God’s Word or leadership will have their candlestick removed. Extra-biblical methods of evangelism, baptizing, or using grape juice preserved by man’s art is like what God told the children of Israel in Exodus 20:25, *“And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.”*

In conclusion, are you saved? Are you a member of one of the Lord's churches? If your saved and not a member of one of the Lord's churches, why not? Does the church you attend bear the marks of a true New Testament church? If not is your church truly one of the Lord's churches?



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