



ZEALOUSLY RELIGIOUS BUT WITHOUT GOD

Many people today are erroneously satisfied with their faith and religion and feel so sure they are on the right path. They are against anyone who tells them otherwise. Some of them are so irrational that even when they are told the truth, they will not accept it. The saddest part of it all is that they claim to believe the Bible as God's word; but, ironically, rather than obeying God's commandments, they succumb to human doctrines and creeds.

OPEN-MINDED STUDY OF GOD'S WORD

My plea, therefore, with anyone reading this book is for him to do so with open-mindedness, ready to hear God's word, obey it, and prove it. The Bereans "were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things [they heard] were so. (Acts 17:11). No wonder, then, when Paul was writing to the Thessalonians, he charged them to "test all things; hold fast what is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21). I, therefore, plead with you to prove your belief; that whether, in its totality, you are doing the will of God.

Jesus once said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matthew 7:21-23)! Here, Our Lord Jesus Christ described people who would be satisfied that they are serving the Heavenly Father, but because their religious beliefs and activities are not a part of the Father's will, He will tell them, "I never knew you." So, you can be religiously zealous, and yet be wrong! Now is your chance to prove your belief.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN

Again, Jesus said, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9).

Here our Lord stresses plainly the cause of vain worship—when we practice that which men authorize, our worship is vain.

Later in the same chapter, His disciples told Him that one of the Jewish religious sects, the Pharisees, were offended at His sayings. "But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch' " (Matthew 15:13-14). Jesus was not talking about an ordinary plant, but about religious sects. He was not talking about literally blind people, but religious leaders who are blind to the truth.

It is sad to note today that religiously blind leaders also quote these passages to drive home their false teachings. But be warned that if you do not diligently prove your faith with God's word, the Bible, the false leader, and those who are led by him, will both fall into the ditch!

A CANDID EXAMINATION

Let us, in a very simple way, expose some false teachings, and with the Scriptures disprove them. Our special Bible text is II John 9: "Whoever transgresses, and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ, has both the Father and the Son."

Abiding in the doctrine of Christ means abiding within the laws, rules, regulations and practices of the New Covenant, the last will of God for all mankind.

Please read these reference again and again: (Hebrews 1:1-2; Galatians 3:21-25; Hebrews 8:13 and 9:16-17). To have fellowship with God and His Son, we must abide in the doctrine of Christ. II John 9 is a very simple passage by which you can prove your belief and practice in Christianity.

Let us, in the light of this passage, consider some very simple and basic beliefs and practices:

1. Is observing and celebrating Christmas, Easter, Good Friday, Holy Michael Day, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Palm Sunday, Harvest, Feast of the Tabernacles, Pilgrimage, etc., part of the doctrine of Christ? No! If the answer to this question is

yes, please state from your Bible where Jesus, the Apostles or the early Christians observed such feasts.

2. Is sprinkling for baptism a part of the doctrine of Christ? If you say it is of Christ, please state where sprinkling for baptism was practiced during Christ's earthly ministry or by the Apostles and the early Christians.

3. Is it a part of the doctrine of Christ that His followers wear titles like: Reverend Father, Reverend Mother, Archbishop, Cardinal, Pope, General, Senior Apostle, General Overseer, Founder, and the like? If this is a part of His doctrine,

please state where in your Bible Christ, or His apostles and the early Christians wore such titles!

4. Is it a part of the doctrine of Christ that we have women evangelists, women bishops, women elders, etc.? Please state where you find such doctrine in the New Testament!

5. Is beating drums, playing in a band, picking the guitar, clapping hands and dancing in worship services a part of the doctrine of Christ? We are not talking about Judaism but about Christianity. Please state where Christ, His Apostles and the early Christians used mechanical instruments of music in New Testament worship. Ignorance of the fact that we live under the New Testament causes some people to quote passages from the Psalms in the Old Testament in an effort to justify their practice.

6. Is kneeling down before an altar and paying homage to a graven image, and making the sign of the cross, a part of the doctrine of Christ? If you say yes, please state where Christ, His Apostles or disciples, and the early Christians did so in the New Testament! Remember that God does not dwell in temples made with hands, and Christians are to keep away from idols (I John 5:21)

7. Is paying tithes, levies, and marking these things in a register against your name (in most cases against death rituals) part of the doctrine of Christ? Just show in your Bible where a Christian, and not a Judaizer, paid tithes!

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8. What about the wearing of special robes and a literal cross about one's neck—are these also a part of the doctrine of Christ? Please prove what you believe about this from your Bible!

9. Is the doctrine of salvation from sickness, joblessness, barrenness, poverty and easy, smooth sailing through life, the doctrine of Christ? In other words, did Christ die for the physical salvation of the body? And did Providence guarantee in His scheme of human redemption that his people would never be sick or hungry or poor?

Paul wrote to Timothy, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (II Timothy 3:12). Read also Matthew 5:10-12; Luke 19:10; and you will hear from Christ Himself on this subject.

THE WORDS OF CHRIST THE STANDARD OF JUDGMENT

Remember that Jesus Christ said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak" (John 12:48-49). God will judge you by His words as they are found in the New Covenant, the last will of God to all mankind. You will never be judged by the false teachings of your religious leaders, church Manuals, books of Discipline, Prayer books, catechisms, the tenets of faith, etc. Neither will you be judged by the Old Testament. You will be judged by the doctrine of Christ. Only by your being loyal to the doctrine of Christ can you enjoy fellowship with God and with His Son (II John 9).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION FOR YOU

God gave the best of heaven to redeem you from sin (John 3:16). "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of

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a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8). Christ, thus, paid the price for your sins.

God, Christ and the Holy Spirit have done their part. Now, do your part by simply following God's plan of salvation for you. Are you saved? You may say, yes! Then I ask you, "Are you saved outside the body of Christ?" Paul declared, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10-23).

"The wages of sin is death ..." (Romans 6:23). The result of sin is eternal death—separation from God and the glory of His power (Romans 6:23; II Thessalonians 1:7-9). The only way to escape this condemnation is to accept the offer of salvation in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). To get into Christ:

1. You must hear the gospel: "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).
2. Believe the gospel: "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9; John 3:16).
3. Repent of your sins: "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3; Romans 2:4).
4. Confess your faith in Jesus Christ: "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation" (Romans 10:9-10; Matthew 10:32).
5. Be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins: "Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27). "Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' " (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16).

Upon doing all the above, you are added by the Lord to His church, the body of Christ—and not to some denomination, or a human organization called a church (Acts 2:47; I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4-6; Colossians 1:18). Having done these things in submission and obedience to Christ, you start living for, and serving, Him until death (Philippians 1:20-21).

Save yourselves from this wicked world today (Acts 2:38-40). God loves you (John 3:16; I John 4:8).

YOU ARE ZEALOUSLY RELIGIOUS BUT HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:1-3)

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HOW CAN I FIND THE RIGHT CHURCH?

With more than 500 different denominations in this country, Nigeria, it is not surprising that many folk are confused. The question is often heard "How can I be sure which is the right Church?" That question should be asked, and it also should be answered with a much better reply than is usually heard: "Which one doesn't matter, for one church is as good as another."

The truth is that Jesus built only one Church, not many (Matthew 16:18). He died for one Church (Ephesians 5:25); He shed His blood for one Church (Acts 20:28); He is the head of one Church (Colossians 1:18); and He is married to that one Church (Ephesians 5:23-32). That obviously does not mean that "one church is as good as another," now, does it?

The apostle Paul, in the first generation of the Church, revealed that "some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits" (I Timothy 4:1). He further warned that, because some people do not have a love for the truth, "... and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the

love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2:10-12).

The multitude of denominations is the direct result of "... For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap to themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables" (II Timothy 4:3). When people reject the truth of God and follow teachers who tell them what they want to hear, new religious groups result. That is what a denomination is.

We look around and see "many churches." Is there a way to tell which is the right one? Can there even be one that is right? Let us recognize, first, that the Church is a people: "The Lord added to the Church daily such as were being saved. He is the head of the body, the Church. We, who are many, are one body in Christ" (Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:18; Romans 12:5). When you look for "the right Church," you must look at the people who compose that Church. Therefore, let us find some of the requirements, if we would honestly answer the question, How

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can I find the right Church? What kind of people will we find when we find the right Church?

THEY WILL BELIEVE AND FOLLOW THE WORD OF GOD

As the prophet wrote, "It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). The right Church will be composed of people who look to God for guidance, who respect His word and study it diligently (II Timothy 2:15).

Jesus told the apostles, "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me" (Luke 10:16). Christ is "... the mediator of a new covenant" (Hebrews 9:15), and that is what the apostles preached. Paul said, "... because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (I Thessalonians 2:13). The right Church will adhere to that teaching found in the word of Christ, the New Testament.

We must recognize that we are "justified by faith" (Romans 5:1). The right Church will teach that. Not by our own works, but "by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). Acceptable faith is clearly defined in the Scriptures: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice ... by faith Noah prepared an ark ... by faith Abraham obeyed" (Hebrews 11:4-8).

To find what God wants us to do, to believe Him and His promises, then to do what He tells us—that is acceptable faith. In fact, God warns that if we "have faith and not works," that faith is dead and cannot save us (James 2:17-24). The right Church will believe the word of God and act on what it teaches. It does no good to sing "How I love Jesus" unless we do what He says! As He put it, "If you love Me, keep My commandments ... This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (John

14:15; I John 5:3) The right Church will be active doing what it believes and teaches.

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THEY WILL TEACH THE SIMPLE PLAN OF SALVATION

Why complicate? Jesus made it simple, and His apostles kept it simple. We are "saved by grace through faith" (Ephesians 2:8), if we are saved at all. God's grace, as manifest in all that Jesus Christ has done for us, brings the response of man's faith (Hebrews 11:4-8).

Notice how Paul wrote of our salvation by grace through faith: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood ... Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For, if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son ... Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death" (Romans 3:23-25; 5:9-10; 6:3)? We have access by faith into this grace (Romans 5:2) when that "faith works by love" (Galatians 5:6) in doing the will of God.

Jesus set forth very simple terms for our salvation. He showed that we must believe (John 3:16; 8:24; Mark 16:16). That faith is to lead us to repent of our sins: "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). The Lord also said, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32). In the "great commission," Jesus promised that "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

The apostles, in accord with that New Testament commission preached the gospel of Christ to people lost in sin. They heard, believed, repented, confessed faith in Christ and were baptized into Christ (Acts 2:36-41; 8:35-39; 16:31-34; 22:16; Romans 6:3-6). When they did that, the Lord added them to "the right Church" (Acts 2:47). The right Church still teaches that, and the right Church still grows in the exact same way.

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THEY WORSHIP BY NEW TESTAMENT AUTHORITY

The pattern of worship of the Church of the New Testament was very simple. Even though they were familiar with the Sabbath of the Jews, Christians met "on the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7). The Lord arose from the dead on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:9). The Lord appeared to the apostles on the first day of the week (John 20:1-19; 20:26).

The Church began on the first day of the week (Acts 2:1-47). Early Christian writings confirm that the practice of the early Church was to assemble each first day of the week for worship. When the disciples assembled for worship, they studied together from the word of God (Acts 2:42; 20:7). Without the use of instruments of music, they were "speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

The right Church still does that. The right Church, believing firmly that God answers their prayers (James 5:16), often prays together (Acts 2:42; 12:12; Philippians 4:6). They come together "on the first day of the week to break bread" (Acts 20:7), thus commemorating regularly the death of the Savior (I Corinthians 11:23-28) as their sacrifice for sin. And on the first day of the week, they "lay by in store" (I Corinthians 16:2), giving cheerfully and liberally for the Lord's cause (II Corinthians 8:5-8; 9:6-8). The right Church still does this.

THE LOCAL CHURCH IS SCRIPTURALLY ORGANIZED

The New Testament reveals, and history confirms the fact, that the Churches of Christ (Romans 16:16), 1900 years ago, were autonomous. That is, they were bound together by a common faith and love, but they were not bound by any kind of organizational structure. Each congregation (local church) selected her own leaders (Acts 6:1-6). Not even the apostles being with them could change that! No man, or group of men, or congregation ever selected leaders for those in another local church.

It was, and is, God's plan that each local church would have elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). These men were called "pastors, bishops, elders" (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; I Peter

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5:2-3). They were to "oversee" the church, tending to the "flock of God which is among you" (I Peter 5:2-3). Members were told, "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls" (Hebrews 13:17). The elders were the only ones in the New Testament church to rule, oversee or shepherd the church.

In the local church, there were also "deacons" and "ministers" (Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:8-12; Philippians 2:25). These all served under the oversight of the elders in the various areas of service that were needed in the local church (Acts 6:1-6.). In the New Testament Church, there was never a "one-man rule," and the deacons and/or ministers were not the decision-making group. The elders (always plural) had the oversight of the local church. In the right Church, it is still this way.

THEIR HOPE WAS TO LIVE ETERNALLY IN HEAVEN

Jesus made this promise, "... I go to prepare a place for you ... that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3). Peter spoke of the death and resurrection of Jesus as a pledge of that promise: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Peter 1:3-4).

The hope of Christians 1900 years ago was not on this earth, but beyond this life. The apostle Paul wrote, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness ..." (II Timothy 4:8). "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

The right Church still has that same hope. Because they believed Jesus. His followers "went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word" (Mark 16:20). They knew that "the gospel of Christ ... is the power of God to salvation" (Romans 1:16), so they told their neighbors and friends and relatives about the

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wonderful Savior they had found (John 4:29-30; Acts 5:42; 8:4). They were concerned about lost souls, so they used every means they could to tell others about Christ.

The right Church still does that. Because someone cares for your soul, you are reading this paper. Thousands of copies of this tract are in circulation as a means of reaching out to those who need the Savior.

How can you find the right Church? Go to God's word, find what the Church should be, then find a group that is identical to what you read in God's word. We urge you to investigate the Church of Christ.

WILL YOU INVESTIGATE IT?

Much of the worship in the past has been vain, being corrupted by doctrines of men (Matthew 15:8-9). Much preaching on the plan of salvation has not been in harmony with the word of God (Matthew 7:13-14; 21-24). Religious error damns the souls of men! It's tragic to make the same mistakes in each generation! You have God's word; why not investigate the religious tenets that bind you? Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). We invite you to investigate His word with us and then help us restore New Testament Christianity. We cordially invite you to the Church of Christ.

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World Evangelism by the Printed Page
A Work of Churches of Christ
P.O. Box 2029
Arlington, TX 76004-2029

missionprinting@gmail.com

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