

## **Lesson 3 – How Many Churches Did Christ Establish?**

The world is full of different churches, sects, and denominations. Why are there so many? This causes confusion. Which would be the true church? Or is it like what a chorus says, "It doesn't matter which church you go to"? The truth is that only in the Bible can we find the correct answers to these important questions.

### **The Founder and Owner of the Church**

(Read Matthew 16:13-19) (Ask the student: What did the people think about Jesus?) The people had several ideas: that Jesus was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or another prophet. All these were good people, men of God. However, Jesus was not satisfied with these ideas and asked the apostles what they themselves thought of Him. (Ask the student how Peter answered) "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Ask the student what it means that Jesus is the Son of God) It means that Jesus is more than man, He is divine, He is eternal, He existed in heaven and took the form of a man. The fact that Jesus is also the Christ means that He is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament, that He is at once Prophet, Priest, and King. We can talk about this in detail another day.

Today we will emphasize what Jesus soon said: "On this rock I will build my church," that is, on the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Here Christ makes it very clear that the church is His. It is not the church of Peter, nor of Mary, nor of John Paul, nor of David, nor of any other person. The church is Christ's. And it is He who builds it. Since the church belongs to Christ, it is not up to us to do with it whatever pleases us. We have to do what pleases Him.

### **The Head of the Church**

(Read Ephesians 1:20-23) (Ask the student what this text teaches about Jesus) Jesus was resurrected, is now seated at the right hand of God in heaven, has supreme authority now and in the future, is Head over all things in the church, and the church is His body.

Rome teaches that the church has an invisible head (Christ) and also a visible head (the pope). The reality is that this makes the church a monster: a body with two heads. Other sects do not speak so openly of a human being taking the place of Christ; however, they too have various types of leaders and councils that dictate what congregations and individuals have to do, thus claiming to be the head of the church. It can't be like that. Christ is "head over all things for the church." He is the only head that directs everything, that makes the decisions, that commands. Christ is the only Head of the church. We have to do what He commands us, not what men command.

It would also be a monster to have one head with two bodies. The same book of Ephesians in 4:4 says that there is "one body." It means that Christ has only one church. He did not say, "I will build my churches." He said, "my church." Certainly Christ has many churches in the sense of individual congregations in different geographical locations, but not in the sense of different sects or denominations. Such divisions are against God's plan.

## **The Husband of the Church**

(Read Ephesians 5:21-32) (Ask the student what this text tells us about the relationship between Christ and the church) First we see that Christ is the Head of the church. Then it teaches us that the church is subject to Christ. The head of a human being commands and controls the entire body. If the foot, for example, does not respond to the command of the head, it means that something is very wrong. This condition is called paralysis. The church, too, must respond to Christ's commands. If not, it is because there is a spiritual disease. It's called sin. There are churches – sects, denominations – today that in many ways are not subject to Christ. For example, God speaks clearly against homosexuality in Romans 1:24-28. But there are churches today that support homosexuality. They are not churches of Christ. This is just one example of what happens when men do not allow Christ to be the Head of His church.

But being subject to Christ is only half of the great truths in Ephesians 5. The other half is that, like a good husband, Christ loves the church. (Ask the student how much Christ loves the church) So much so that he "gave himself up for it." (Ask the student what it means to "gave himself up.") That he died on the cross. This expression indicates that He died on the cross of His own free will. As He said before to His apostles: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it away from me, but I lay it down by myself" (John 10:17-18). Jesus could easily have saved himself. On several occasions, he escaped from those who wanted to kill Him. However, when the right time came, Jesus allowed himself to be killed. Out of love for us, as He also said in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." (Ask the student in what sense Christ died for us) "Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

## **How Is the Church Identified?**

We have seen that Christ Jesus is the Founder, Owner, Head, and Husband of the true church. And Jesus is the only begotten, eternal Son of God the Father. So it is natural that in the Scriptures the church is identified as the church of Christ and the church of God. For example, 1 Corinthians 1:2 mentions "the church of God." Romans 16:16 speaks of "the churches of Christ." Men have invented countless names to identify the churches they have invented. When men use names for their church that are not biblical, they are confessing that Christ is not the founder, owner, and head of their church. To say "church of Christ" is not to say a name, but to confess who is the Owner of the church. To Him be the glory!

## **Questions**

1. What is Peter's confession as to who Jesus is? (That He is the Christ, the Son of God)
2. Based on this confession, what was Jesus going to do? (to build His church)
3. To what extent did Christ love the church? (He died for her)
4. Why are there so many different churches? (men have established them, ignoring that Christ is the Founder, Owner, Head, and Spouse of the true church)