

How Many Churches?

How many churches did Jesus promise to build? One. "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:18).

How many churches did Jesus die for? One. "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

How many churches is Christ the head of? One. "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church . . ." (Ephesians 5:23a).

How many churches is Christ the Savior of? One. ". . . He Himself being the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23b).

How many churches are there in God's plan? One. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were also called in one hope of your calling" (Ephesians 4:4).

Into how many parts or denominations is the church divided? None. "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). "Has Christ been divided?" (v. 13a)

- by Frank Himmel

This May Shock You

This may shock you, but there are a number of things that the Bible does not teach that a multitude of people are not aware of.

1. The Bible does not teach that one church is as good as another. Rather, the Bible says, "There is one body" (Ephesians 4:4). Christ only built one church. Are the ones He didn't build just as good as the one He did build? That would make man's works as good as God's. Jesus said, "Every plant, which My heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13). You see, Jesus didn't seem to think that one church is as good as another.

2. The Bible does not teach that Christ will return to earth to reign on a literal throne for 1,000 years. That would be a shocking fact for more than 80% of religious people. However, the verse that so teaches is yet to be found. I read, that when Christ comes again, that will be the end (1 Corinthians 15:23-24).

3. The Bible doesn't teach that Christ was born on December 25th. Neither does the Bible teach that there were three wise men.

4. The Bible doesn't teach that terms such as "Reverend," "Pastor," and "Father" should be applied to a preacher. The term "Reverend" is only used one time in the Bible, and that time it applies to God (Psalm 111:9, KJV). "Pastor" simply means one that is a shepherd over a flock. It is descriptive of an elder in the church that meets certain qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Jesus condemned the use of such terms as "Father" in Matthew 23:1-12.

5. The Bible teaches that only those who are the members of the body of Christ will be saved. I read that Christ is "the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). Thus, He only promises to save those in the body. His body and church are one and the same (Colossians 1:18). Thus, only those in His church, the church of Christ, will be saved (Romans 16:16).

6. If number five is a shocker, this will shock you more. The Bible teaches that not all of those in the body of Christ will be eternally saved. I read how the faithful will receive a crown of life (Revelations 2:10). Some of those that were once sanctified by the blood of Christ will turn aside and be lost (Hebrews 10:26-29).

7. The Bible teaches us that "rejoice" and "forgive one another," are commands of God (Philippians 4:4; Ephesians 4:32). These are not just suggestions that will make us better people. Neither is there an option to choose or not to choose. These are commands! Violating them is sin (1 John 3:4). To sin is to separate oneself from God (Isaiah 59:1-2).

8. The Bible teaches that "faith" is a work (John 6:29). If we are saved by faith only, we are saved by a work. If works do not save us at all, then we are not saved by faith.

- by Donnie V. Rader

Sour Grapes

The children of Israel had a proverb in the days of the prophets. "...The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?" (Ezekiel 18:2) This of course is simply not true. A father does not eat a sour grape and a child's face is puckered from the tartness of the fruit. God would set the record straight and no longer allow Israel to cite such foolishness (Ezekiel 18:3).

We learn in the text of Ezekiel 18 that "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (verse 20).

This passage teaches us that we do not have to fall victim to our circumstances. If we have a wicked family we do have to fall prey to their wickedness. We can rise above their lawlessness, and be rewarded for our own obedience. The opposite is also true. If we have a good family, that goodness does not preserve us in our wickedness. "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14:10-12) Truly this is the only way it can be for God to be just and fair. "Is not My way equal?" (Ezekiel 18:25)

- by *Stacy Crim*

The Value of Positive "Peer Pressure"

I wasn't ready to do it yet. I really didn't want to get started at it. But, my neighbor had already mowed his grass two times, and my yard was looking pretty shabby. I figured if he mowed a third time before I mowed the first time, it would really make me look bad. So, even though I wasn't really in the mood, I got the mower out of the garage and went to work.

How often have you been motivated in a similar fashion? Maybe it was at work or school. Perhaps it was a project or chore that you really dreaded. But someone else did something that made you realize that you needed to get to work.

We often talk about "peer pressure." Most often we mention it with a negative connotation. In this regard we are talking about how others can influence us to do evil. We are "pressured" to talk, act and dress like worldly people do. There is great danger in this, and we have rightfully warned about these negative influences. "Evil companions corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33).

But, there is a positive side to "peer pressure" that we may be tempted to overlook. When we are around good people who are doing good things, we are motivated to follow their example. We are urged to get busy in the work of the Lord. We are encouraged to live right. We are moved to imitate them and be like them. This is good and helpful.

We are to "exhort one another daily" (Hebrews 3:13), and to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Hebrews 10:24). Christian, are you setting a good example for others? Are you motivating them in positive ways? Are you helping your brothers and sisters to be more like God wants them to be? Think!

- by *Greg Gwin*