ONE CHURCH OR  
MANY CHURCHES?

**Ultimate question**:

* **Is there only one true church?**
* **If so, does a person have to be a member of that church to be a saved Christian?**

It all boils down to that.

My answer to both of those questions is YES.

* I'm going to try to prove my point from the scriptures.
* Each of you will have to judge for yourselves whether or not I have proven my case.

**NOTE**:

* This study is not to “gloat” that “me and my church are better than you and your church.”
* This study is out of concern, because … if there is only one true church and people have to be in it to be saved, wouldn't you need to know that?

Acts 26:27-29

27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

29 And Paul said, "**I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am**, except for these chains."

This expresses my desire. If I understand the scriptures correctly, and if there is only one true church, and if a person has to be a member of that church to be saved, then I would want you to be part of that church with me. That's what this study is all about.

**NOTE**: I'm interested in what the scriptures say … not what the majority of people say.

* If the truth of this hinges on what the majority say, then I have lost the case already.
* But truth does not depend on majority vote.

John 17:17

17 Sanctify them by Your truth. **Your word is truth**.

# PROVING THE CASE

## The word "church" (ejkklhsiva) means "called out from."

The Greek word **ejkklhsiva** is composed of two parts:

**ejk** which means "out of."

**klhsiva** which is the passive form of the word **kalevw** meaning, "I call."

The church is a group of people – not a building.

The church is a group of people "called out from" something.

## The church ⇨ people "called out of" the world and into a body of fellow believers.

The people were "called" by the gospel:

**2 Thessalonians 2:14**

14 … **He called you by our gospel**, ...

The people are "called out of the world":

**1 Peter 2:9**

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who **called you out of darkness into His marvelous light**;

The people are "called into a body of fellow believers":

**Ephesians 4:25**

25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are **members of one another.**

## Jesus promised to build only one such called-out-body (church).

Matthew 16:18

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Notice the word "church" is singular here.

Ephesians 1:22-23

22 And [God] put all things under [Jesus] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to **the church**,

23 **which is His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

We learn here the church is "the body" of Christ. Now watch:

Ephesians 4:4

4 **There is one body** and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of **your calling**;

Here are the "called out." They are the body of Christ. There's only one body.

All of this information, when put together, is causing me to draw the conclusion there is only one church acceptable to the Lord – not many churches.

## The Lord Himself added people to this church when they believed enough to be baptized for the remission of sins.

On the Day of Pentecost, when the church was established by Christ, the people were told to believe in Christ:

Acts 2:36

36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel **know assuredly** that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

After they were instructed to believe, observe what else they were told:

Acts 2:37-38

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

38 Then 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.

Did anyone respond?

Acts 2:41

41 Then those who gladly received his word were **baptized**; and that day about three thousand souls were **added to them**.

Notice:

* People are being baptized.
* After baptism they are being added by someone to something.

**Q**: Who's doing the adding? What are they being added to?

Acts 2:47

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And **the Lord added to the church** daily those who were being saved.

The Lord Himself is adding people to his "called out body" (the church).

## No saved person was ever left out of that church.

## No unsaved person was ever added to that church.

Read it again:

Acts 2

41 Then those who gladly received his word were **baptized**; and that day about three thousand souls were **added to them**.

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And **the Lord added to the church** daily those who were being saved.

Compare v41 with v47 carefully. Notice that "those baptized" (v41) corresponds with "those being saved" (v47). Clearly, to be saved one must be baptized. This fits perfectly with what Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk 16:16).

**Q**: Were any saved people left out of the church by the Lord?

**A**: Not one.

**Q**: Were any unsaved people added to the church by the Lord?

**A**: Not one.

The Lord does not forget or make mistakes. If a person was baptized for the remission of sins, he is saved and the saved are always added by the Lord to the church.

## This body (church) was purchased by the blood of Christ.

Acts 20:28

28 … shepherd **the church of God which He purchased with His own blood**.

Ephesians 5:25

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her**,

1 Peter 1:18-19

18 knowing that you were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

19 but **with the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Peter wrote this to members of the church.

* The church was purchased with the blood of Christ.
* If one can be saved without the church, then one can be saved without the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 5:23

23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also **Christ is head of the church**; and **He is the Savior of the body**.

If a person says, *"You do not have to be a member of my church to be saved and go to heaven,"* that would seem to indicate it is not the church of the Lord because the church of the Lord is absolutely essential for salvation.

## This body (church) was founded on the teachings of Christ.

Matthew 16:18

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and **on this rock I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Jesus is the "rock" upon which the church is built:

Isaiah 28:16

16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:

"Behold, I lay in Zion **a stone for a foundation**,

**A tried stone**, **a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation**;

Whoever believes will not act hastily.

Jesus is the "rock" upon which the church is built:

1 Corinthians 3:11

11 For no other **foundation** can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is **Jesus Christ**.

Ephesians 2:19-20

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

20 having been built on **the foundation** of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

**Q**: What do the scriptures mean when they say: Jesus is the foundation of the church?

**A**: It means the church is founded upon what Jesus taught.

* Teaching ⇨ **"doctrine"**
* This is why doctrine is important – because the church of the Lord is founded upon what the Lord taught.

To be founded on what the Lord taught means to be submissive to 100% of what the Lord taught.

If a group claims to be the Lord's church, but does not submit to all which the Lord and His apostles taught, they are not really the Lord's church:

Matthew 7:24-27

24 "Therefore whoever hears **these sayings of Mine**, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the **rock**:

25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26 "But everyone who hears **these sayings of Mine**, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

Here is the foundation of the church: **The teachings of Jesus**.

* If a church practices the sayings of Jesus, according to v24, they are built upon **a rock**. (The word used in Mt 16:18).
* If a church does not practice the sayings of Jesus, according to v26, they are built upon **the sand** and that church will fall.

It's that simple.

The apostle John would put it this way:

1 John 2:3-5

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

## The apostles taught the same doctrine of Christ everywhere they went.

Acts 2:42

42 And **they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine** and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

1 Corinthians 4:17

17 For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of **my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church**.

## A curse was placed upon anyone teaching any other doctrine.

Galatians 1:8-9

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

## Since every congregation was organized by the same doctrine, every congregation identical in doctrine and practice.

Think about this carefully:

* The church is founded upon the doctrine of Christ (Mt 16:18; 1 Cor 3:11).
* The Lord's doctrine is found in the written word (2 Tim 3:16-17).
* The written word is the "seed" of the kingdom:

Luke 8:11

11 "Now the parable is this: **The seed is the word of God**.

God designed seeds to **"bring forth after their kind"**:

Genesis 1:12

12 And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields **seed according to its kind**, and the tree that yields fruit, whose **seed** is in itself **according to its kind**. And God saw that it was good.

Because seed "brings forth according to its kind":

* A corn seed will produce only a corn plant.
* A wheat seed will produce only a wheat plant.

Since the word of the Lord is the "seed" of the kingdom (church) (Lk 8:11), when the pure word (seed) of God is preached, the only possible result will be a church identical to the original church of the Lord.

If differing churches are established, it is because different seeds were planted – because seeds "bring forth after their kind" (Gen 1:12).

## The members of the church were forbidden to divide the church into different denominations.

1 Corinthians 1:10

10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be **no divisions [denominations] among you**, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

## Those causing divisions contrary to the doctrine of Christ were to be "marked and avoided."

Romans 16:17-18

17 Now I urge you, brethren, **mark those who cause divisions and offenses**, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and **avoid them**.

18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

## The one church of Christ will always exist because it is produced by a "seed" ⇨ the word of God.

Luke 8:11

11 "Now the parable is this: **The seed is the word of God**.

Matthew 24:35

35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

## Any church not founded by the Lord will be "uprooted" at the end of this age.

Matthew 15:13-14

13 But He answered and said, "**Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted**.

14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

The reason we have different churches is because different seed is being planted.

If the pure word of God alone were preached, only one plant (church) would result.

Matthew 13:24-30

24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "**The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field**;

25 but while men slept, **his enemy came and sowed tares** among the wheat and went his way.

26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'

29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First **gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them**, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

**Q**: What produced the tares?

**A**: Different seed.

**Q**: What will happen to those plants (churches) which were not produced by the word of God?

**A**: They will be *"bound in bundles and burned"* at the end of time.

# DIFFERENT SEED

The reason we have different churches (division) is because different seed is being sown.

What are some of the different seeds being planted by men which will be "uprooted" (Mt 15:13)?

## Salvation by "faith only."

This is a different seed from the word of God.

Jesus and the apostles taught faith + works of obedience:

James 2:24

24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and **not by faith only**.

Mark 16:16

16 He who **believes** and is **baptized** will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

## Salvation without baptism.

This is a different seed from the word of God.

* *"Accept Jesus as your personal Savior."*
* *"Say the sinner's prayer."*

Jesus and the apostles taught the saving blood of Christ is applied at the point of baptism in water for the remission of sins.

Romans 10:13

13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

Acts 22:16

16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and **be baptized**, and **wash away your sins**, calling on the name of the Lord.'

One "calls on the name of the Lord" in baptism.

## "Once saved, always saved."

This is a different seed from the word of God.

Jesus Himself warned that true disciples can lose their salvation.

Matthew 5:13

13 "You are the salt of the earth; but **if the salt loses its flavor**, how shall it be seasoned? **It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out** and trampled underfoot by men.

## The "kingdom of God" will be set up soon on the earth.

This is a different seed from the word of God.

The "kingdom of God" has already come ⇨ the church.

Matthew 16:18-19

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

19 And **I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven**, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Colossians 1:13

13 **He has** delivered us from the power of darkness and **translated us into the kingdom of the Son** of His love,

## Women installed into leadership positions.

This is a different seed from the word of God.

* *Women preachers.*
* *Women leading prayers.*
* *Women leading songs.*

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.

35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

We are reminded: This is a command of the Lord Himself.

1 Corinthians 14:37

37 … the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

## Tampering with the communion (when & how often).

Different seed is being planted regarding the when and how often to eat the Lord's supper.

* *Communion at weddings, funerals.*
* *Candlelight communion service on Christmas Eve.*
* *Communion once a month.*

The apostles of the Lord taught communion on the first day of every week:

Acts 20:7

7 Now **on the first day of the week**, when **the disciples came together to break bread**, …

## Tampering with the communion (how to observe it).

Different seed is being planted regarding how to observe the Lord's supper.

* *Plurality of loaves.*
* *Breaking the loaf.*
* *Fermented wine.*
* *Plurality of cups.*

The apostle of the Lord taught the church to follow the example of Jesus (1 Cor 11:23-25). The example given is as follows:

* One unbroken loaf (1 Cor 10:16-17)
* Unfermented grape juice (Mt 26:17-29)
* One cup (1 Cor 11:25)

## Tampering with the singing.

Different seed is being planted regarding the singing of praise in worship.

* *Special singing groups.*
* *Mechanical instruments of music.*

The Lord and the apostles taught only a cappella, congregational singing.

Ephesians 5:19

19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

**"Sing"** ⇨ *"make music with voice"*

No authorization given by Jesus or the apostles for mechanical music.

This is not an exhaustive list, but a sample of different seeds being planted. These doctrines matter because changing the doctrine of Christ is an attack upon the foundation of the church.

# CONCLUSION

* The Lord has only one church and
* There are saved Christians only in the Lord's church.

Ephesians 2:14-16

14 For He Himself is our peace, who **has made both one**, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself **one new man from the two**, thus making peace,

16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in **one body** through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

**NOTE**: Men are "reconciled to God in one body." This passage teaches:  
 **(a) there is only one church** and   
**(b) men must be in that one church to be saved**.

You may have to go home and think about these things for a while, but those are the reasons I have drawn my conclusions. Thank you for listening.