

THE IDENTITY OF THE LORD'S CHURCH

By Keith Greer

"Join the church of your choice." "One church is as good as another." "We all worship the same God." Ever heard any of these comments, on the radio, television, and billboards all across our great nation? Yet, does man have a choice?

Certainly all men have a choice in whatever they do. Did God leave it up to "my choice" in which church to place membership? In a matter of speaking, yes. The question we need to ask: which one is God going to be pleased with?

"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." {Matthew 16:18} Jesus promised to build His church. All churches claim to be His. Can one tell which one is the Lord's?

Yes! Simply by consulting the word of God and looking at the "**identifying characteristics**" of this church. Let me give you a few suggestions.

WHO IS THE BUILDER? Christ promised to build His church. Read Matthew 16: 18,19. If Christ did not build the church that you're a member of, can it be considered His church?

THE FOUNDATION. "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." {1 Corinthians 3:11}

"This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone. " {Acts 4:11} If Christ is not the foundation, is it the true church?

THE BEGINNING. The prophets said it would come in the days of the Roman Empire. Daniel 2:44,45. It would begin in Jerusalem, Isaiah 2:2,3. Where were the apostles on that day? Read Acts 1 and 2. If the church did not have it's beginning in Jerusalem, is it the true church?

THE NAME. What name does the church wear? Who does it belong to? Church of God, 1 Corinthians 1:2; Body of Christ, Colossians 1:18; House of God, 1 Timothy 3:15; Churches of Christ, Romans 16:16; Christ's church, Matthew 16:18. If the church wears another name (Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Mormon), is it His church?

BY ITS WORSHIP. How does the church worship God? Singing, Ephesians 5:19; Praying, Acts 2:42; The Lord's Supper, weekly, Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30; Giving, 1 Corinthians 16:1,2; Preaching, Acts 20:7; 20:32. If a church does more or less, is it the Lord's church?

WHAT IS THE STANDARD? What book does the church use as a guideline? Read 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:3; Ephesians 4:5. Jesus told us that His words will judge us in the last day, John 12:48,49. What if the church has a creed book along with the Bible? Is it still the Lord's church?

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER. How does one become a member of the church? Voted in? By faith in God? Here is what the Bible tells us: Hear, Romans 10:17; Believe, John 8:24; Repent, Luke 13:3; Confess, Acts 8:37; Be Baptized, 1 Peter 3:21. What if I get in by doing more or less. Can it still be the Lord's church?

MISSION. What is the purpose of the church? Preach, Mark 16:15,16; Edify, Ephesians 4:11,12; Help needy saints, Acts 2:44,45; 11:27-30. What if we have things like fellowship dinners, recreation, secular education, and other worthy causes?

In our country alone there are well over 2,500 different "churches." How does one know if they belong to the true church? Look at these "identifying marks" carefully and prayerfully. God gave us a blueprint so men could know which one truly belongs to Him. Does it matter? Think about it. ***