

## "JESUS, THE WAY"

### Jesus, The Way Out Of Religious Confusion

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Many people who wish to follow Jesus are repelled by the multitude of denominations and conflicting doctrines and practices taught by those professing to be Christians
2. Such distaste for denominational division is in keeping with the spirit of the New Testament...
  - a. Jesus prayed fervently for unity - **Jn 17:21**
  - b. Paul condemned religious division - **1 Co 1:10-13**
3. While some denominational leaders like to justify their existence, we know that religious confusion does not come from God...!
  - a. God is the author of peace, not confusion - **1 Co 14:33**
  - b. Religious strife is indicative of carnality, and a work of the flesh - **1 Co 3:3-4; Ga 5:19-21**
4. Even so, is it possible for people today to simply be Christians, and not a contributor to the denominational division of today?

[The answer is **Yes!** And **Jesus shows us The Way Out Of Religious Confusion!** Notice Jesus' own example in the religious climate of His day...]

#### I. THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

##### **A. NOTE THE RELIGIOUS CLIMATE OF HIS DAY...**

1. When Jesus came to this earth, the Israelites were living under God's law given by Moses
2. In that law, God had not made any provision for the division of His people into religious sects or parties
3. Yet, by the time of Jesus, the Jews had formed several distinct religious parties:
  - a. **Pharisees** (somewhat conservative)
  - b. **Sadducees** (very liberal, the "modernists" of their day)
  - c. **Essenes** (radical isolationists)
  - d. **Herodians, Zealots** (political religionists)
4. It was assumed that all who were serious about religion would be associated with one of these groups

##### **B. HE MAINTAINED A NONSECTARIAN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD...**

1. To which of these groups did Jesus belong? He belonged to **none** of these groups!
2. Instead, He maintained a **"nonsectarian"** relationship with God to the very end
  - a. As an Israelite, living at a time when the Law of Moses was still in effect, He was simply an "Israelite"
  - b. In addition, He encouraged all to live by the Law while it was still in effect - cf. **Mt 5:17-20**
  - c. In other words, He encouraged all to simply be what the Law of Moses intended them to be (i.e., "Israelites")

##### **C. WHAT WOULD JESUS BE TODAY...?**

1. Would He be a Baptist, or Catholic, Presbyterian, or Methodist, etc.?

2. If He was simply an Israelite then, would He not simply be a **"Christian"** today?
3. That was certainly what His disciples came to be called - cf. **Ac 11:26**

[The example Jesus has set for us is clear: just be what God originally intended under the Law which is in effect. Since in the New Testament (the "law of Christ", cf. **1 Co 9:21**) the disciples of Christ were called "Christians", so we should be!]

Not only should we be content with being "called" Christians, we should also be concerned with **"just being Christians."** **Nothing more, nothing less!** But how can we be sure that we are simply Christians, members of the church we read about in the New Testament? It helps to see what the Bible tells us about ...]

## II. THE LORD'S CHURCH

### **A. PROMISED BY JESUS...**

1. Jesus promised to build His church - cf. **Mt 16:18**
2. The word "church" comes from the Greek word **ekklesia**, which means "a called-out group, an assembly, a congregation"
3. Jesus was promising to create His own group of people who have been **"called"**

### **B. ESTABLISHED THROUGH PREACHING THE GOSPEL...**

1. How does this "calling" take place?
2. According to Paul, we are **"called"** by the gospel - **2 Th 2:14**
3. On the first Pentecost after the ascension of Christ, we see by preaching the gospel Peter "called out" those who were willing to express their faith in Jesus - **Ac 2:38-41**
4. Notice that those who gladly responded in faith, repentance and baptism were **"added"**
  - a. To what and by whom were they "added"?
  - b. We find the answer in **verse 47**: "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."
5. The day of Pentecost was the beginning of the Lord's church (His "ekklesia")
6. This "called-out" assembly or group was created when the gospel was proclaimed and people responded to it

### **C. EXPANDED THROUGH PREACHING THE GOSPEL...**

1. At first, the church existed only in Jerusalem
2. As the gospel spread, and people responded to it, groups of these saved people in various cities met together
3. Each group became known as a church in a **local** sense (in contrast to the church **universal** which is made up of all those saved throughout the world)
4. For example, during Paul's first missionary journey, many such churches were established - **Ac 14:21-23**
5. By simply teaching the gospel of Christ, a local church was formed when those who obeyed the gospel joined together in their work and worship

### **D. EDIFIED THROUGH THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE...**

1. Though united in Christ, these local churches were independent of any human association or federation of churches

2. Christ directed them through His inspired apostles, as they taught them how to worship and work together - cf. **Ac 2:42**
3. Sometimes this teaching by the apostles was done directly, other times by appointed emissaries - e.g., **1 Co 4:17**
4. Just as often, the teaching was done through the epistles or letters written by the apostles - cf. **1 Co 14:37; 1 Ti 3:14-15; 2 Th 2:14-15; 3:14**

[When we read what the Bible says us about the Lord's church, we learn that by responding to the gospel and paying close heed to the "**apostles' doctrine**" (cf. **Ac 2:42**), people in the first century were able to be Christians only, without all the confusion prevalent today.

Is it possible for us to do this today? Yes! Here is how...]

### III. THE WAY OUT OF RELIGIOUS CONFUSION

#### **A. ACCEPT THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL...**

1. Remember, Christ calls us into His ekklesia (church) through the gospel
  2. Therefore, we can begin by obeying the same instructions that Peter gave on the Day of Pentecost - **Ac 2:38**
  3. Repenting of our sins, and being baptized for the remission of our sins, we then receive the same blessings as did the 3000 on that day: **salvation!**
  4. By being saved in this manner, we **know** that the Lord truly adds us to His church just as He added them - cf. **Ac 2:47**
- **What then...?**

#### **B. FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS...**

1. The early Christians continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine - **Ac 2:42**
  - a. They joined no other religious organization, and neither should we!
  - b. In Christ, we are automatically united with all others who are in Him!
2. As members of the Lord's church, we should study carefully the New Testament description of the church that continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine
  - a. This description is found in the Book of Acts and in the Epistles which follow it
  - b. It is here that we will find instruction from the Lord's apostles on **how**:
    - 1) To worship the Lord acceptably
    - 2) To be scripturally organized as local congregations
    - 3) To live and work together as Christians, spreading the gospel of Christ through word and example
3. Since the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit, we may be sure their instructions were exactly what Jesus wanted them to be!
  - a. If we duplicate the early churches by following the apostles' instructions, we will simply be "Christians", and we can be certain the Lord is pleased with us
  - b. As Jesus said to His apostles about those who would receive or reject their instructions: **"He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."** - **Lk 10:16**

## CONCLUSION

1. Simply being a Christian, and duplicating a New Testament congregation is not as difficult as one might think...
  - a. There are literally thousands of such congregations throughout the world
  - b. There is likely one in your area right now!
  - c. There is also the option of starting a congregation in your own home
2. By following the example and teachings of Jesus, as revealed by His apostles, we can be led out of the religious confusion that dominates the religious world today!
3. Do you want to be simply a Christian, a member of the Lord's church we read about in the New Testament...?
  - a. If so, then I plead with you to first render obedience to the gospel of Christ as proclaimed by Peter and all the apostles - cf. **Ac 2:36-38**
  - b. You have the assurance of God's Word that you will then be added by the Lord Himself to His church - cf. **Ac 2:47**
  - c. Then, you have the responsibility to learn and follow the apostles' doctrine as you serve the Lord Jesus in your life - cf. **Ac 2:42**

If you have not yet responded to the commands of the gospel as put forth by Peter in **Ac 2:38**, why not let the reaction of those who did on the Day of Pentecost describe your actions today:

**"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." - Ac 2:41**