

# The Identity of the Church

Matthew 16:18

---

## INTRODUCTION:

- A. **Matthew 16:18** – “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.”
1. The church was established in Acts 2 in the city of Jerusalem.
  2. Can that same church be found today? Yes!
  3. How will we know it when we see it? That is an excellent question and an answerable one.
- B. **Illustrations:**
1. Amber alerts when a child is missing.
  2. Alerts when an elderly or mentally challenged person is missing.
  3. When professional personnel, as well as volunteer personnel come together to begin a search for a missing person.
    - a. Pictures are looked at, printed, and distributed to the searchers.
    - b. All of the know marks of identification are gathered and communicated to the searchers.
      1. Race
      2. Gender
      3. Age
      4. Height
      5. Weight
      6. Hair color
      7. Color of eyes
      8. Distinguishing marks
      9. Clothing last known to be wearing
      10. Etc.
    - c. The searchers would search until they located the individual that matched every mark of identification. Not just some, but all of the marks of identification.
- C. Likewise, there are many churches in the world. How can one know which one is the right one, the genuine one? How can one know which one is Christ's church?
1. You must take all the marks of identification of the Lord's church in the Bible and compare the various churches with them.
  2. Only after you find the one that matches every mark of identification can you be sure you have found the right one.
  3. But what are the marks of identification? Where are they found? The Bible is the answer!

**IDENTIFICATION MARKS OF THE CHURCH.****A. Christ established the church.**

1. **Matthew 16:18** – “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.”
2. Any church established by anyone else cannot be the Lord’s church.

**B. It had its beginning in Jerusalem.**

1. This truth is established in Luke 24:45-49 and Acts 2:5
2. Any church established anywhere else could not possibly be the church established in Jerusalem.

**C. The date of origin was in A.D. 30, on the day of Pentecost.** Any church established at any other time cannot be the church established in Acts 2.**D. The church wore the name of Christ.**

1. Speaking of the various congregations, the apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 16:16** – “The churches of Christ greet you.”
2. In speaking to the church at Corinth, he further says in **1 Corinthians 12:27** – “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”
  - a. But what is the body?
  - b. Ephesians 1:22-23 says that the body is the church.

**E. Its members were called Christians.**

1. **Acts 11:26** – “. . . And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.””
2. **Acts 26:28** – “Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You almost persuade me to become a Christian.’”
3. **1 Peter 4:16** – “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”
4. **Acts 4:12** – “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”
5. Any other name is not the name the first and early members of the church wore.

**F. Christ is the only Head of the church.**

**Colossians 1:18** – “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. ”

**G. There is but one true church.**

1. Ephesians 4:4-6 – “There is one **body** and one **Spirit**, just as you were called in one **hope** of your calling;  
 one **Lord**, one **faith**, one **baptism**;  
 one **God** and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”
2. But what is the body?
  - a. The body is the church? **Colossians 1:18** – “And He is the head of the body, the church . . . ”

- b. Therefore if there is one body and it is the church, there is but one church!

#### H. **There are terms for entering the church.**

1. Please observe from Acts 2 . . .
  - a. The ones who asked in **Acts 2:37**, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” . . .
  - b. Were told in **Acts 2:38** – “. . . Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . .”
  - c. Were among those we read about in **Acts 2:41** – “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.” . . .
  - d. Were the same ones included in **Acts 2:47** who were “. . . Praising God and having found favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”
2. The Bible shows us what we must do in order for Christ to add us to His body, the church.
  - a. One must have faith. Hebrews 11:6
  - b. One must repent of their sins. Acts 17:30; Luke 13:3, 5
  - c. One must confess Christ to be God’s Son. Matthew 10:32-33
  - d. One must be baptized (immersed) in water for the remission of their sins. Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16
  - e. Once one is saved, Christ then adds that saved person to His body, the church. Acts 2:47
3. Where does the gospel come in?
  1. The gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4
  2. When we are baptized into Christ, we immolate the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Romans 6:3-5
4. Through obeying the commands of Christ, one is said to be born into the church or the kingdom of God. John 3:3-5

#### I. **The worship of the church is peculiar.**

1. Christians assemble together on the first day of the week—Sunday. Acts 20:7
2. In our meeting together we sing. Ephesians 5:19
3. In our meeting together we pray. Acts 2:43
4. In our meeting together we study. 2 Timothy 2:15
5. In our meeting together we partake of the Lord’s Supper. Acts 20:7
6. In our meeting together we give financially as we have prospered. 1 Corinthians 16:2

#### J. **The Doctrine of the church is based on the Bible only.**

1. It is accepted without addition, subtraction, or substitution. Revelation 22:18-19

2. The Bible is the one and only source of authority for the church and its members.

**K. The organization of the church must be according to God’s plan.** It is simple . . .

1. It is simple:
  - a. Christ is the Head of the church. Ephesians 5:23
  - b. Each congregation is to have its own elders to spiritually oversee the congregation. 1 Timothy 3
  - c. Each congregation is to have its own deacons to implement the daily work of the church. Acts 6
2. The Lord’s church does not have any national or international man-made organization.

**L. The mission of the church is three-fold.**

1. It is to preach the gospel. Mark 16:15-16
2. It is to help those in need. Galatians 6:10; James 1:27
3. It is to edify, buildup, and strengthen the members. Hebrews 3:12-14

**M. Each Christian must live the faithful Christian life.**

1. We are to love Christ and not the world. 1 John 2:15
2. We must produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Galatians 5:22-23
 

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| a. Love          | f. Goodness     |
| b. Joy           | g. Faithfulness |
| c. Peace         | h. Gentleness   |
| d. Longsuffering | i. Self-control |
| e. Kindness      |                 |
3. We must be faithful even if it means our death. Revelation 2:10

### **CONCLUSION:**

- A. These are some of the marks of the church. They are taken from the pattern—The Bible.
- B. Compare your church with these. For example, take the first four:
  1. Ask yourself, “Who established my church?” Was it established by Christ or man?
  2. Then ask, “Where was my church established?” Did it have its beginning in Jerusalem or some other place?
  3. Continue by asking, “When was my church established?” If it was after A.D. 30 it couldn’t be the Lord’s church.
  4. And finally, ask yourself, “What name does my church wear?” If it is not the name of Christ, then how can it belong to Christ?
- C. When you discover that your church is not the church found in the Bible, leave it behind and obey Christ and allow Him to add you to His church . . . The one in which salvation is to be found.
- D. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**