

The Identity of the Lord's Church

Matthew 16:18

Indian Prince teaching lesson on perspective: four blindfolded men brought into room with elephant. Legs=trees, trunk=wrinkled serpent, side=wall, tail=rope. Who was right?

Introduction: The Church faces an identity crisis. Do we truly understand the distinctive nature and power of the body of Christ?

I. From God's View: His Family

- A. It is the house of God
 - 1 Timothy 3:15 The church is the house of God, the pillar and ground of truth
 - Acts 16:34 Philippian jailer obeyed gospel with all of his household
- B. Christians are God's Children
 - 1 Peter 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart
- C. Can God have children outside of his family?

II. From Christ's View: His Body & Kingdom

- A. We are his body,
 - Ephesians 1:22-23 And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all
 - 1. Every part of the body is important, Ephesians 4:16
 - 2. We do Christ's work on earth today
- B. We are his Kingdom
 - Matthew 16:19 keys to Kingdom
 - 1. We obey him as king
 - 2. We understand he is all powerful

Aside: OUR VIEW

- A. It is the way to salvation
 - Saved are in the church, those in the church are saved
 - Acts 2:38, 2:47 Lord added to the church those who were saved
 - Can't be saved outside of Christ: his body, his bride, his kingdom
- B. Most important thing in the world

What profit to gain world, lose your soul
Seek first kingdom of God

III. From the World's View: Peculiar

- A. Responsible people are either in the world or the church
 - 1. Can you be saved without the gospel?
 - 2. Can you be saved and not be in the church?
- B. We are to be in the world, but not of the world
 - John 17:15 I do not pray that you should take them out of this world, but that you should keep them from the evil one.
 - 1. Light, salt, influence
 - 2. Recognize the world is passing away
 - 1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in this world. If anyone loves the world the love of the father is not in him. Lust of flesh, lust of eyes, pride of life.

IV. From the View of Other Religious Groups

- A. The Lord's Church is not comprised of sects or denominations
 - Acts 28:22 This is the sect that is spoken against everywhere
 - 1 Cor. 1:10-13 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 among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. **11** For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's *household*, that there are [c]contentions among you.
 - 12** Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." **13** Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?
- B. It's Name: It belongs to Christ
- C. It's Worship, it is patterned by Christ
- D. It's Terms of Entrance, chosen by Christ

Conclusion: We must belong to the same church Peter, Paul, John and the people of Acts 2 belonged to. If we do now what they did then, we will be now what they were then.