

JUST WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF GOD?

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In 1 Corinthians 1:2, the apostle Paul addresses his letter to the *Church of God*. Later in that epistle he claims he's not fit to be an apostle because he persecuted the *Church of God* (1 Cor. 15:9). In a personal letter to a young man being groomed for the ministry, he advises him to be sure a man can manage his own family before he's entrusted to care for the *Church of God* (1 Tim. 3:5). So, just what is this *Church of God*?

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus Christ is very plain spoken about the fact that He will build His church and the gates of hell (Grk. *hades*, meaning grave) would not prevail over it. In-other-words, it wouldn't die out. It would continue until His return! And that is exactly what's been going on! But how has it survived? What has been the method used by Jesus Christ to assure its protection from complete destruction—total extermination?

To answer this question we need to properly define the "church." It comes from a Greek word, *ekklesia* (ek-klay-see-ah). it means a calling out, assembly, or community. It is derived from another Greek word, *Kaleo* (kal-eh-o), which means to call, to bid, call forth, or invite. So, what we begin to understand is Christ will build an assembly, group of called out ones. But, God the Father will bid them, or invite them to this calling (John 6:44 & :65).

Now admittedly, this is still somewhat ambiguous as far as detailing a description of these "called out ones" that make up this assembly, labeled, the *Church of God*. However, we are told it will be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ, the Rock, as the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). Interestingly enough, we can now begin to acquire some definition with this information.

Clearly, what's jumping out at us is there doesn't appear to be any indication these called out ones must be connected with, or to any physical, or structured organization. That's not to say organizations are bad, or something to be avoided—no conversely, they are helpful and valuable to the dynamic of our Christian growth via the benefit of interactive fellowship and evangelism; but, it doesn't dismiss this fact—it is not required for "*membership*" into His body of believers. Clearly, you can be attached to Christ, the vine (John 15:1-12), and at the same time "*detached*" from an organization, or congregation—and remain a viable member in the body of Christ.

But how—how does that work? Well, we must realize that the *real question is*: What is the definition of a "*called out one*?" After-all, did we not identify the "Church" as *called out ones*? So, if we can identify and define these individuals that have been called forth—that have been invited—we then have also, simultaneously, defined the church—because they are one and the same! Understand, the called out ones are considered *Christians* and they are those,, that make up, or define the Church! Notice: "**Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ...for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are**" (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

Keep in mind, Christ told us we would know them by their fruits. They would show love toward God by doing His commandments (John 15:10-11). In addition, they would also be keeping the "royal law" of doing unto others as you would want them to do unto you (Jas. 2:8)—"That you love one another, as I Have loved you" (John 15:12). And unquestionably, they would be doing the "work" of God by witnessing and warning with the Gospel; and making disciples for Christ,

baptizing them and teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever Christ taught those original apostles (Matt. 28:18-20).

Yes, there is no doubt presently, Christians may be found any where in the world, scattered across the landscape of the globe, sometimes independently worshipping the living God and our Saviour and sometimes in fellowship with a congregation, or an organization. But make no mistake, they are **spiritually connected**, as part of the Body of Christ at large—*because the Church is a **Spiritual Organism—it is not defined as, or by an organization !!***

And so we ask again; how can we know the individuals we fellowship with in our congregations, or at God's festivals we attend, or perhaps, in the course of our lives, people we randomly meet are indeed, Christians? The not so simple answer to that is—"you shall know them by their fruits" [Matt. 7:15-20].

The two links below will help better describe and explain just what those fruits are and how we can ensure we are indeed, one of those "called out ones" within the Body—the Church of God, at large!