

were still some who had "not defiled their garments." The faithful remnant in these and other churches made up — and make up — the "one true church."

What All Churches Must Do

In John's epistles, written about the same time, we see echoes of the same problems. He speaks of those who questioned both the divinity and humanity of Jesus (doctrine of the Nicolaitans?); of those claiming they could sin without guilt and of some who hated their brethren. There had even been divisions which John explains by saying, "*They went out from us because they were not of us*" (1 Jn 2:19).

John stated the solution. Approximately ten times in 1 and 2 John he speaks of "the beginning." Most often that expression seems to refer to the beginning of the church on Pentecost under the direction of the apostles of Jesus (see 1 Jn 2:24). After warning of false teachers (1 Jn 4:21) he provides the standard by which they are to be tested. As an apostle he writes: "*We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error*" (1 Jn 4:6).

We cannot be responsible for every church in the world that calls itself a church of Christ. Our responsibility as congregations is to go back to be the church as it was in "the beginning" and to the apostle's doctrine in which that church continued steadfastly (Acts 2:42). As individuals we must make sure that we are a part of the faithful remnant that makes up the "one true church."

- - Biblical Insights, February 2012

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Feel free to send articles you have found helpful and instructive as well. Be sure to give credit to the source so it can be properly cited. See or call Ed Williams at 662.323.9502 or glenedwilliams@yahoo.com. (EW)

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EAST COLUMBUS BULLETIN

(1Jo 5:20) And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Why Do "Churches of Christ" Differ so Widely?

by Sewell Hall

A sign reading "Church of Christ" in front of a building tells you very little these days. Most any doctrine or practice may be found inside. This is frustrating to many people.

Outsiders make fun of the situation, saying, "You preach unity but you are the most divided people we know." They may add, "This just proves you are not the true church." This last statement shows a total misunderstanding of what the true church is, but it is a misunderstanding shared by far too many "members of the church."

How Can We Explain It?

First, many churches that claim to be churches of Christ are not "of Christ" at all. Any church can claim that designation, but only one that truly recognizes Christ as its head is justified in using it. There is no denominational accrediting board that can certify a church as a true church of Christ — the Lord Himself is the judge of that.

In addition, there are churches, claiming to be churches of Christ, that intend to follow Jesus but have widely differing ideas of what that involves. Some, like the Sadducees, "*are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God*" (Mt 22:29). Others know the scriptures but construe them loosely, rejecting only those things that are forbidden. Still others believe that only those things clearly authorized are to be practiced; but even among these there may be differences as to

Times of Services

Sunday

9:00 a.m. Worship
10:00 a.m. Bible Study
11:00 a. m. Worship

Wednesday

7:00 p.m. Bible Study

Other Study and Worship Opportunities

- 2nd Sunday 2:00 p.m. Trinity Care Home Worship Service
- 2nd Saturday 6:30 a.m. Men's Bible Study –Ranch House Restaurant
- 3rd Sunday Neighborhood Bible Study 6:00 p.m. (TBA)
- Young Bible Scholars monthly meeting (TBA)
- The Pines Bible Study Sunday 8:00 p.m.; Mon. 5:00 p.m.
- Cady Hill Bible Study Sunday 8:00 p.m.; Thurs. 6:00 p.m.
- Recorded sermons and Gospel Meetings can be obtained by signing up in the foyer or going to the church website at <http://eastcolumbuschurch.com/> or contacting Steve Coburn.

News and Notes

- **Home Bound Members:** Mike Butler, Joyce Ratcliff, Eula Mae Harliss
- **Limited Health:** Joyce Monasco, Willena Woods, Wade and Doris McCrary .
- **Sick:** James Ratcliff is recovering from heart surgery performed February 7th.
- **Others to remember:** Marion Butler, Steve Coburn, David Cote, Lee Gallop, April Green, Marilyn Lavender, Wade Steinback, David Allen Williams, Doris Young (Lynette Coburn's mother). Vickie Stevens (wife of Tim Stevens).

Bible Question? Who did Peter heal in Lydda before raising Dorcus in Joppa?

Your Answer: _____

Last month's answer: Sing and Pray – What we are to do with spirit and understanding. 1 Cor. 14:15

what is authorized. When such congregations are truly autonomous, it is inevitable that there will be noticeable differences.

Such Differences Are Not New

Differences existed among churches established by the apostles even while the New Testament was still being written. The "seven churches of Asia" (**Revelation 2 and 3**) provide good examples.

A visitor in Ephesus would have found an old established church that was doing everything right but with a lack of love (**Rev 2:4**). Moving on to Smyrna, he would find a rather poor little group that had a bad reputation among the Jews in town (**Rev 2:9**). Visiting the church in Pergamum, he might well hear a teacher defending idolatry, approving the eating of meat sacrificed to them (**Rev 2:14**). And if that was not shocking enough, going on to Thyatira he might meet a woman in the church who claimed to be a prophetess and was actually teaching and seducing the men to commit fornication (Rev 2:20).

If the traveler expressed concern about what he had found thus far, he might well be told that he would find things better in Sardis where there was a church widely known as a really lively church. But on arriving there, he would be disappointed to find that, as far as doing what God wanted them to do, they really were dead (**Rev 3:1-2**). Moving on to Philadelphia, he would find a church made up of good people, but relatively small and with "little strength" (**Rev 3:8**). Finally, in Laodicea, visiting the church he might be met by greeters at the door offering him a brochure and telling him how rich and self-sufficient the church was; but on closer inspection he would find that they really were spiritually "wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked" (**Rev 3:17**). At least, that's what the Lord found.

Were all of these churches right because they would claim to be "of Christ"? **No!** Two of them were threatened with total rejection by the Lord (**Rev 2:5; 3:16**) and three others were warned of dire consequences if they did not repent. Did the remaining congregations comprise the "one true church?" **NO!** The one true church is not composed of congregations but of faithful individuals saved by the Lord (**Acts 2:47**). In spite of the false teaching and immorality in some of the churches there