

May We “Self-Identify” As A Church?

Just like gender is not defined by “self-identity,” does a religious group belong to Christ because they self-identify as a “church” and claim to belong to Christ? When does a church belong to Jesus? What makes a church “of Christ”?

Jesus may reject a church that once belonged to Him (Rev. 2-3). Many religious groups claiming Christ never truly belonged to Him. So, how do we find His churches?

His churches are composed of people who belong to Him (recall *May We Self-Identify as a Christian?*). Then those people must grow in true love, following the Chief Shepherd and Overseer (Eph. 4:15-16; 1 Pet. 2:25). The words they teach must be rooted in Scripture not the traditions of man (Matt. 15:3, 9). Their words must not contradict Scripture, as do “church creeds” (1 Cor. 4:6). Their words must be rooted in the New Covenant, not only the Old Covenant (2 Cor. 3:4-8). They must speak *and practice* the truth (Rev. 3:1). Their leaders must first be approved by God (1 Tim. 3:1-7). They must not tolerate sin in word or deed but help individuals in sin to leave it or mark and avoid them (2 Thess. 3:12-15).

Does God only accept flawless churches? More next week.