

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE – PART FIVE: ONE CHURCH

The church is central to God's eternal purpose. It is not an afterthought or human creation but the divine institution through which the redeemed are gathered, nurtured, and prepared for eternity. Yet today, the religious world is divided into thousands of denominations, each claiming to represent Christ. Amid such confusion, many have come to believe that "one church is as good as another." But Scripture presents a very different picture. The Bible teaches that Christ built one church, purchased it with His blood, and adds the saved to it alone. This lesson proclaims that there can be only one true church—the body of Christ, united in faith, doctrine, and mission.

Introduction:

1. This is the fifth and final lesson in the series *There Can Be Only One*, which has traced five great spiritual absolutes: one God, one revelation, one religion, one way of salvation, and one church. Each truth is inseparably linked. The one God gave one revelation to establish one religion that teaches one way of salvation, which gathers all the saved into one church. To separate these truths is to dismantle the unity of God's purpose.
2. The religious world has drifted far from this divine pattern. Denominations abound, each with its own name, creed, and government. Men have built churches according to their own desires, yet Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (**Matthew 15:13**). The existence of many churches is evidence of human division, not divine design.
3. The church that Jesus built is not a man-made organization but a spiritual body composed of all who have been saved by obedience to the gospel. It is described as "the body of Christ" (**Ephesians 1:22–23**), and just as there is one head, there can be only one body. The same Lord who purchased it with His blood governs it by His Word and sustains it through His Spirit.
4. In this final lesson we will examine the divine origin, unity, identity, and destiny of the one true church. We will see that its existence is not a matter of human opinion but of divine revelation, and that every believer must be certain that he belongs to the church Christ built—not one established by man.

1. The Divine Origin Of The Church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47):

The church originated in the mind of God, not in the imagination of man. It was purposed before the foundation of the world and brought into being by the death and resurrection of Christ.

- a. Jesus declared, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (**Matthew 16:18**). The church belongs to Christ alone—He is both its builder and its foundation (**1 Corinthians 3:11**).
- b. The church came into existence on the Day of Pentecost, when the gospel was first preached in its fullness and the Lord added the saved to His body (**Acts 2:41, 47**). Every person who obeyed the gospel became part of the church of Christ.
- c. The church is not a physical institution but a spiritual kingdom composed of all who have been born again (**John 3:3–5**). Its citizenship is in heaven, and its purpose is eternal (**Philippians 3:20–21; Ephesians 3:10–11**).

2. The Unity Of The Church (Ephesians 4:4–6; John 17:20–21):

The church of Christ is one in nature, doctrine, and fellowship. Division among believers contradicts the prayer of Christ and the plan of God.

- a. Paul affirms, "There is one body, and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (**Ephesians 4:4–6**). The body is the church (**Ephesians 1:22–23**), and therefore there can be only one church according to divine design.
- b. Jesus prayed that His followers "may be one... that the world may believe" (**John 17:20–21**). Unity among believers is not based on compromise but on conformity to the truth revealed in Scripture (**John 8:31–32**).
- c. Religious division exists because men have replaced the Word of God with creeds, traditions, and denominational structures (**1 Corinthians 1:10–13**). True unity can be restored only by returning to the original pattern—the apostolic doctrine (**Acts 2:42**).

3. The Identity Of The Church (Romans 16:16; Colossians 1:18):

The true church can be recognized by its name, doctrine, organization, and practice, all of which are revealed in the New Testament.

- a. The church belongs to Christ, and therefore it bears His name. Paul wrote, “The churches of Christ salute you” (**Romans 16:16**). The name identifies ownership and allegiance; it honors the Saviour, not man.
- b. The true church follows the apostles’ doctrine (**Acts 2:42**). It teaches salvation by grace through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**). It worships in simplicity—teaching, prayer, giving, the Lord’s Supper, and singing (**Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 14:15**).
- c. Christ is the only head of the church (**Colossians 1:18**). There is no earthly headquarters, human hierarchy, or denominational authority. Local congregations are autonomous, guided by elders who meet the qualifications of Scripture (**1 Peter 5:1–3; Titus 1:5–9**).

4. The Destiny Of The Church (Ephesians 5:25–27; 1 Corinthians 15:24):

The church is not merely an institution on earth; it is the bride of Christ, destined for eternal glory.

- a. Christ “loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it... that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (**Ephesians 5:25–27**). The church’s destiny is eternal union with Christ in glory.
- b. At the end of time, Christ will deliver the kingdom back to the Father (**1 Corinthians 15:24**). Only those who are in the church—the saved—will be part of that final triumph. Outside the church there is no salvation, for Christ is the Saviour of the body (**Ephesians 5:23**).
- c. The church will endure when every human institution has perished. Nations will fall, kingdoms will crumble, but the church of Christ will stand forever, shining as the eternal family of the redeemed (**Daniel 2:44; Revelation 21:2–3**).

Conclusion:

1. The one church of Christ is not a denomination but the divine body of all who have been saved by obedience to the gospel. It is rooted in God’s eternal purpose, revealed in the Scriptures, and established through the blood of Christ (**Acts 20:28**). To belong to it is not a matter of joining a human organization but of being added by the Lord Himself.
2. The unity of the church reflects the unity of its Lord. Just as there is one God and one faith, so there is one body. Division is the result of human departure from divine revelation. To restore unity, we must return to the Word, lay aside sectarian names and doctrines, and stand upon the authority of Christ alone (**1 Corinthians 1:10**).
3. The identity of the church is seen not in its size or popularity but in its faithfulness to apostolic doctrine. The true church is known by its adherence to the New Testament pattern, its spiritual worship, and its submission to Christ as head. Every congregation must constantly measure itself by that standard, reforming wherever it has strayed.
4. The destiny of the church reminds us of its glory and responsibility. Christ will return for His bride—a church purified, faithful, and steadfast. To neglect the church is to despise what Christ died to redeem. Our calling is to serve faithfully within His body, to love the brethren, and to labor until He comes, that we may be presented faultless before His presence with exceeding joy (**Jude 1:24**).

Applications:

1. Since there is only one true church, every believer must be certain he belongs to it (**Acts 2:47**). This requires more than emotional conviction—it requires obedience to the gospel as revealed in Scripture. The Lord, not man, adds the saved to His church. Therefore, joining a denomination is not equivalent to being added to the body of Christ.

2. We must reject the modern spirit of denominational tolerance that says, “Attend the church of your choice.” Truth is not determined by choice but by revelation. Jesus promised to build *His* church, not many (**Matthew 16:18**). To honor Him, we must belong to and uphold that one church.
3. Membership in the true church carries responsibility. We are called to maintain its unity, support its work, and reflect its holiness (**Ephesians 4:1–3**). A divided, worldly, or inactive church betrays the purpose of its Lord. Every member must labor faithfully, using his talents for the good of the body (**1 Corinthians 12:12–27**).
4. The one church must hold fast to the doctrine of Christ and reject every innovation that departs from Scripture (**2 John 1:9**). The temptation to modernize worship or compromise truth for popularity is strong, but faithfulness demands that we remain steadfast, speaking where the Bible speaks and silent where it is silent.
5. Understanding that there is one true church should fill us with gratitude and devotion. Christ shed His blood for this body; therefore, to love Him is to love His church (**Ephesians 5:25**). We should cherish its fellowship, guard its purity, and labor for its growth. The church is the bride of Christ, and her glory will one day be revealed when the Lord presents her faultless before the Father in everlasting joy.

Questions:

1. When and how did the church of Christ begin (**Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47**)?
2. Why can there be only one true church (**Ephesians 4:4–6**)?
3. How can we identify the true church today (**Romans 16:16; Colossians 1:18**)?
4. What is the destiny of the church at the end of time (**Ephesians 5:25–27; 1 Corinthians 15:24**)?
5. How should we respond to the truth that there is only one church (**1 Corinthians 1:10; Jude 1:24**)?

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Questions & Answers:

1. When and how did the church of Christ begin (**Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47**)?

Answer: It began on the Day of Pentecost after Christ's resurrection, when the gospel was first preached and the Lord added the saved to His church (**Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47**).

2. Why can there be only one true church (**Ephesians 4:4–6**)?

Answer: Because there is only one body, one faith, one Lord, and one baptism. Multiple churches with conflicting doctrines cannot all be of God (**Ephesians 4:4–6**).

3. How can we identify the true church today (**Romans 16:16; Colossians 1:18**)?

Answer: By its name, doctrine, organization, and worship—all of which align with the pattern revealed in the New Testament (**Romans 16:16; Colossians 1:18**).

4. What is the destiny of the church at the end of time (**Ephesians 5:25–27; 1 Corinthians 15:24**)?

Answer: Christ will present the church to Himself in glory and deliver the kingdom to the Father; only those in His body will share in eternal life (**Ephesians 5:25–27; 1 Corinthians 15:24**).

5. How should we respond to the truth that there is only one church (**1 Corinthians 1:10; Jude 1:24**)?

Answer: We must remain steadfast in unity, faithful in service, and joyful in hope, living as members of the body Christ purchased with His blood (**1 Corinthians 1:10; Jude 1:24**).