

in Hebrews 6:1-2. Several of the church were in trouble because they were tolerating error (Rev. 2:14 & 2:20). The last church had ceased to show any interest in spiritual matters (Rev. 3:15).

There are other churches in the Bible that struggled to be faithful, and that struggle reveals to us the standard Jesus uses to judge a church. The Corinthian letter shows us that denominations, improper worship, and tolerance of error. The church in Antioch and Jerusalem struggled with identifying true and false doctrine (Acts 15:1-5). Therefore, there is much said in the Scriptures about how Jesus judges a church.

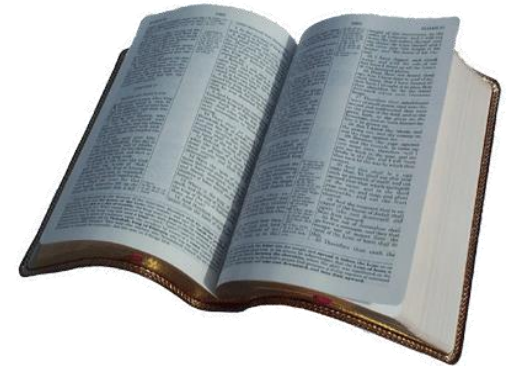
Perhaps your goal here has been to find out if this article lists your church as one that belongs to Christ. Unfortunately, that is not the main point here. YOU need to find out if your church belongs to Christ, or if it is one that merely thinks it belongs to Christ (as did the church in Revelation 3:1). You need to view the construction of the church Jesus built, and then compare it to the church of your current attendance (You don't attend any church? See what Scripture says about that in Hebrews 10:25-28) in order to determine if you are "in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

The New Testament provides a pattern of the church Jesus built in numerous places. These churches bear the name of Christ, not of men (Romans 16:16,

Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:13). You can see the organization of it in Titus 1:5-9, I Timothy 3:1-15, and Acts 20:17-28 (as a starting point). You can see the purpose and intent (mission) of the church in Ephesians 4:12-16, or simply by reading the book of Acts. You can find the worship of the church in places such as Acts 20:7 or I Corinthians 11:17-34 or I Corinthians 16:1-2. It is also of great importance to see what is NOT present in that church; we are repeatedly told NOT to add to the pattern (I Corinthians 4:6, Revelation 22:18-19). In fact, it is this addition that defaults most churches, both then and now; things such as additional offices, social agendas and more fill the activity slots of worldly churches today.

So "do not be deceived"; have the courage to examine yourself and your church. The multitude won't look or take the time to think about it, and the multitude has a destination you want to avoid (Matthew 7:13).

Are All Churches Equal?



We live in a society where most people are content to be deceived. Nothing new there; it has been the case for a very long time. The Bible states that those who have no love of truth would be given delusions to follow (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11). Those delusions may come in the form of emotions, teachers or churches that offer a substance that “*have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion....but are of no value*” (Colossians 2:23).

Is someone self-deluded? Are *you* possibly self-deluded? It is not an easy question to ask, but it is easy to tell. Most deluded people are in that position because they are content to be there, and have no interest in investigating their beliefs. As one person said “*truth demands scrutiny, but error demands tolerance*”¹. Someone who has no interest in determining if they are possibly self-deluded likely is pursuing a delusion.

The real question you need to ask yourself is if you are willing to concede the *possibility* (not the truth, but the possibility that it could be true) that your faith is in vain? Again, most people cannot deal with even the

possibility, and are content NOT to investigate their faith for a subconscious fear of being wrong. Self-delusion is easy to identify, even within ourselves.

If you are still reading, maybe you are among the few who can self-examine, a cornerstone concept in Christianity (2 Corinthians 13:5, 1 Corinthians 11:28, 2 John 8). If so, let us examine a simple question about faith in general: **are all churches equal?**

Of course, anyone with any common sense would immediately see that by the broad nature of the question that the answer is obviously “no”. Even non-believers see a difference between Jim Jones’ suicidal cult and the Southern Baptist convention. But this then brings up several sticky points: if all churches are not equal, what is the standard used to compare them, and where does the church *you* identify with fit into this equation?

First, we should be able to agree that a standard made by men is not going to be good enough. In Christianity, the church is something that Jesus built (Matthew 16:18, I Corinthians 3:9-11); indeed, we are told that a

church was the object that Jesus died to purchase (Acts 20:28). Therefore, the logical conclusion is that the only opinion that matters when it comes to answering the question “are all churches equal” is that of the founder, builder and purchaser of the church – Jesus Christ.

Can we find Jesus’ opinion on churches? Naturally, it will be in the Scriptures that such an opinion would be revealed. One excellent place to find it is in Revelation 2-3. There Jesus conducts a “quality assurance” check on seven churches in what is today the nation of Turkey. Surprisingly, five of the seven fail the test. At least one of the churches no longer belongs to Christ at all (Revelation 3:1) and the other four are headed that direction. What is the conclusion we need to draw? NOT ALL CHURCHES ARE EQUAL!

What is it in these five out of seven churches that caused them to receive a failing grade? Two of the churches had left the basic principles of Christ (Revelation 2:5, 3:1-3). The Bible actually tells us what the basics of Christianity are

¹ John MacArthur, Grace to You