

Why Are There So Many Churches?

*"Because we all interpret the Bible differently"? **WRONG!***

Yes, the Bible has difficult passages, but those are NOT the passages over which most churches disagree. Churches disagree about basic doctrines, such as ...

- How to be saved. But what's so hard to INTERPRET about "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved"? (Mark 16:16) But most churches teach you can be saved before you're baptized, or baptized before you believe.
- How to worship. But what's so hard about "The disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread..."? (Acts 20:7) or, "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"? (Ephesians 5:18-19)

But many churches take practices from the Old Testament, and even make up some of their own.

- How to work together as a church. But what's so hard to "interpret" about "I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"? (1 Timothy 3:15) Or, "Those who gladly received his word were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ... Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved"? (Acts 2:41-47)

But many churches get involved in community service, recreation, and spaghetti suppers, The New Testament church simply taught the gospel,

worshipped together, looked after each other's needs, and shared their common meals at home.

So, why are there so many churches? There are probably many reasons, but here are some for sure:

Everyone's out there guessing at truth. Everybody talks ABOUT the Bible, but few people actually open it or read from it, let alone study it. It's easy to hear a verse or two and form your opinion. The hard thing to do is to keep searching, to keep asking, until you have all the Bible verses on a given topic. Even preachers, who study a lot, can be mistaken, and they're talking about matters of eternal consequence! (The Bible has examples of this.)

More commonly, though, there are **preachers** who know the truth, but **refuse to preach it** for **fear** of losing their jobs. Other preachers are simply **hypocrites**, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men. Others are teaching **doctrines of demons** and are speaking **lies** in their hypocrisy. Some want a following of their own. (1 Timothy 4:1-5; Acts 20:29-30; Philippians 1:15-17)

We all need people we trust to help us figure things out. But blind trust in someone to explain eternal truth can be tragic. Jesus said that "if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch! (Matthew 15:14, in the context of "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.") They let preachers and priests and family and lovers and even TV shows "measure" morality and critical decisions in life. **Only Jesus has the authority** to tell us the truth. He said, "I am the way, the truth" (John 14:6), and "All authority has been given unto Me in heaven and on the earth." (Matthew 28:18)

We can be united, though. Jesus prayed for the unity of His followers, including all disciples down through time. (John 17:17-23) Paul preached against divisions in the churches (1 Corinthians 1:10-13), and taught the same things in all the churches. (1 Corinthians 4:17) That's why the New Testament books were circulated among the churches, and why we have the entire Bible today.

We can read God's word, we can understand it (Ephesians 3:3-5), and we can agree on how to be saved, how to worship, and how to work together as a church.

The only way for us to agree, is for us to all get back to the simple Bible teachings. May God bless you to find a church with that goal.