

THE CHURCH

"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (**Acts 8:12**).

There is a great deal of misunderstanding and misrepresentation in the religious world today concerning the kingdom of God, which is the church. The ever-increasing number of churches and beliefs have left the masses, including many within our own ranks, confused, even disconcerted. There's an apparent sense of uneasiness amongst our own brethren when topics such as the distinctiveness of the church is discussed. In fact, many brethren would prefer that such subjects be avoided altogether. Most folks find it appalling to hear lessons presented on the oneness of the church. They argue that such teaching is offensive, divisive, and judgmental. Really? That could be said of any subject, could it not? The truth is, most folks don't like to admit that they, or someone they love, could be wrong.

How important was Christ and His church to the first century Christian? Look carefully at the above cited passage. Interestingly, throughout the New Testament, teachings on Christ and His church went hand-in-hand. Why was that? That's simple: They understood that you can't have one without the other! The church belongs to Christ- it is His (**cf. Mat. 16:18; Dan. 7:13-14**). Thus, to be a member of His body (**Col. 1:18**) demands that an individual meet His terms of entrance (**cf. John 3:3ff; 10:1ff; Acts 2:38ff**). You see, Christ does the adding: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (**Acts 2:47**). Who does the adding? CHRIST!

Who are those being added? THOSE BEING SAVED/OBEDIENT BELIEVERS! What does Christ add those who were being saved to? HIS CHURCH! Thus, we conclude that only those, who've obeyed the Gospel and have been added by Christ to His church are saved! Salvation is only found within Christ and His church!

If the church I am a member of does not belong to Christ and teach solely the doctrine of Christ, than I must conclude from Sacred Script that I am not part of the saved, and thus am lost! Why is imperative that we teach and preach on the distinctiveness of the church? Because Christ has but ONE, and only those who are faithful and obedient members of His body will be saved!

Terry R. Townsend