

Sunday Morning, December 4, 2022
What Are Evidences of a True Church?
1 Timothy 3:15; Matthew 28:19–20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Matthew 16:19

How to Know a True Church of Jesus Christ?

- I. Is Christ the Prophet: Is Christ's Word Faithfully Preached? 1 Tim. 3:15
 - A. The Bible Requires this Mark of Hearing and Believing the Word
Rom. 10:14–17; 1 Pet. 1:23f; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:12; Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4; Ps. 119:105; 1 Tim. 6:3–5

 - B. The Savior Requires this Mark of Hearing and Believing the Word
Jn. 5:24; Jn. 15:7; Jn. 10:27; Jn. 17:17; Jn. 10:35; Matt. 4:4; Matt. 5:18; Lk. 24:27; Matt. 22:29f;
Jn. 8:31f

 - C. The Apostles Require this Mark of Hearing and Believing the Word
Ac. 4:31; Ac. 6:7; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Jn. 9

- II. Is Christ the Priest: Are Christ's Sacraments Biblically Administered? Matt. 28:19–20

- III. Is Christ the King: Is Christ's Rule Consistently Applied in Discipline? 1 Thess. 5:12–13
 - Eph. 1:22; 4:15; Heb. 12:7, 8; 1 Thess. 5:12; Matt. 7:21
 - A. Church Discipline Flows from the Word
2 Tim. 4:2; Matt. 18:15–19; Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:20; Tit. 1:13; 1 Thess. 5:14;
1 Cor. 5:1–5, 11; 1 Cor. 5:6–7; Rev. 2:2

 - B. Church Discipline Flows from the Sacraments

 - C. Church Discipline Flows from Church Membership Matt. 16:19 and 18:17–18
 - 1. Elders Receive a Person into the Visible Church to Be Discipled and Matured in the Faith

 - 2. Elders Put a Person out of the Visible Church Who Refuses to Be Discipled and Matured in the Faith. 1 Pet. 5:2; 2 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 13:17

Two Important Cautions to Remember:

- 1. It is sometimes easy, and sometimes hard to apply three marks to any one particular congregation or denomination because there is no church in this world that *perfectly* displays the three marks of a true church.
Matt. 3:12; Matt. 13:24, 25; 2 Tim. 2:20; Matt. 13:47; Rev. 2, 3; 1 Ki. 19:18; Matt. 16:18; Matt. 13

- 2. The primary application is to always use the measure of the three marks against ourselves, not others.

QUOTES

“Some people construct a Christianity which consists entirely of a personal relationship to Jesus Christ and has virtually nothing to do with the church. . . [they] have given up on the ecclesiastical institution as hopeless. . . But we need to beware lest we despise the church of God, and are blind to His work in history. We may safely say that God has not abandoned his church . . . He is still building and refining it. And if God has not abandoned it, how can we?”
John Stott

“The church of Jesus Christ is the most important institution in the world. The assembly of the redeemed, the company of the saints, the children of God are more significant in world history than any other group, organization, or nation. The United States of America compares to the church of Jesus Christ like a speck of dust compares to the sun.”
John Piper

"If Jesus had an earthly throne and thence reigned personally over His Church, all men would bow before Him; but being enthroned in heaven at the right hand of the Father, the King is forgotten; out of sight, out of mind. Hence ignorance concerning the work of the Holy Spirit is the cause. Since Jesus governs His Church not directly, but by His Word and Spirit there is no respect for the majesty of His Sovereign government."
Kyper

Jesus Christ’s “transcendent authority over every power and authority is focused supremely on his glorious purposes in and for the church. She alone is his body with a special role in God’s design for the world. Nothing else possesses a higher role and significance for the purposes of God.”
Craig Troxel

“Where Christ is not King, he is neither Prophet nor Priest.”
Horton

“The very purest churches are yet very imperfect, and will continue so to the end, and that some will become so corrupt as to lose their character as true churches of Christ altogether.”
A. A. Hodge

"Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there . . . a Church of God exists."
John Calvin

WCF chapter XXV. 4. This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.

5. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth, to worship God according to his will.

Belgic Confession (Art 29) “The marks by which the true Church is known are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if it maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin; in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church. Hereby the true Church may certainly be known, from which no man has a right to separate himself.”

“No matter how many strong enemies plot to overthrow the church, they no not have sufficient strength to prevail over God’s immutable decree by which he appointed His Son eternal King.”
John Calvin

“The Lord is daily at work in smoothing out wrinkles and cleansing spots. From this it follows that the church’s holiness is not yet complete. The church . . . is daily advancing and is not yet perfect: it makes progress from day to day but has not yet reached its goal of holiness.”
John Calvin. *Institutes*