



# The Good News

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## *Is it Right to Say There is Only One True Church?*

By Michael McCleary

This question is asked quite a bit among Christians when accounts are told which relay another person's displeasure when the statement is made that "there is only one Church." It is presumed (and rightly) that by saying there is only one true Church that this would include the concept that the members of that Church are the only ones going to heaven. The question that is asked is "Is it right to say that we are the only true Church?" which is also to ask, "Is it right to say that the members of that Church are the only ones going to heaven?" I believe that a better question for Christians to ask is "Is it accurate for us to say that our Church is the only true Church?"

The Bible teaches us that the Church is also the body of Christ in **Eph. 1:22-23**. We learn that only those who are part of the Church, or the body, can be saved in **Eph. 5:23**. We find that entrance to the body (the means of obtaining salvation) is very exclusive and is dependent upon elements such as faith (**Mark 16:16**), confession (**Rom. 10:10**), repentance (**Acts 2:38**), and baptism (**I Pet. 3:21**). Then, after one has been made a Christian, one must continue in obedience to the law of Christ (**Rom. 6:4, 17**).

The Bible also teaches us that the Church that belongs to Christ (**Rom. 16:16**) is a singular entity composed of local congregations of people, autonomously connected by faith in Jesus Christ and the observance of His law. Despite the numerous references to the "churches" (plural), Paul taught the same things in every church (**I Cor. 4:17**) which suggests that these churches never taught or practiced anything different from any other. We even find occasions on which Paul rebuked different churches for things they did not do correctly. This denotes an objective and static doctrine, one that did not change and one that could be followed uniformly by all the churches.

Again, the Bible teaches us that those who are "the called" (**Rom. 1:6, 7**) are Christians and members of this body, or Church. The term *ekklesia*, is used in the Bible and is translated as "the church" which literally means "the called out". These "called out" have been predestined (according to the character of a submissive heart) to go to heaven, according to **Eph. 1:5**.

Considering these facts, is it accurate for us to say that we (those of us who are members of the Church that belongs to Christ) are the only true Church? Yes, it is accurate to say this. The Bible clearly specifies only one body and one faith (**Eph. 4:4**). Upon a close and objective study of the Scriptures, one can come to definite conclusions regarding how this Church is to be organized, what kind of worship it is to offer, how its funds are to be used, etc. If someone were to throw all churches (denominations, non-denominations, etc) into a pot and begin a process of elimination, there would only be one Church left...the Church that belongs to Christ (the church of Christ). It is also important to point out that it is possible for a congregation of Christ to have another Gospel-approved name (i.e. The Way, or The Church of the Way, etc.) and be doing exactly as is commanded, although in our modern age this is unlikely.

Is it accurate to say that we (those of us who are members of the Lord's body) are the only ones going to heaven? Yes, it is accurate to say this. The Bible clearly designates those who are "called out" (e.g. those who have believed, repented, confessed, been baptized, and are faithfully obedient) as the only ones who will be going to heaven. Jesus says in **Matt. 7:21** that not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do His Father's will. This is extremely exclusive and conditional. This being the case, Jesus certainly would have made sure that the means to determine the Father's will (the Bible) could be uniformly understood and practiced.

While these things are accurate to say, it would not be wise to say them in so many words. It almost always is perceived as boasting, and that can only serve to undermine efforts to teach. Rather, our efforts should be to point out everything the Bible says and then inform our friends and neighbors that our congregation strives to be everything God wants. However, we should never be ashamed or apologetic to point out that only those who do the Father's will can be saved. "The Bible says..." is always good enough, and if anyone doesn't like it, they can take it up with the author.