

So they're all perfect?

Of course nobody's perfect. So one wouldn't expect to find a church doing all of this perfectly. But if they are truly submitting to Christ, they will be *trying their utmost*.

Once you find God's church, how do you get into it? Quite simply, if the church is the saved people of God, then it follows that you become a part of this church by becoming a follower of Jesus. That's how it was right from the start in Acts 2:41,47. "Those who had gladly received his word were baptised; and that day about three thousand souls were added... And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." God's people don't get a choice of churches to join; *God* adds them to *his* church!

So wherever people are living in obedience to Christ, that's the church of God. And if no one in town is doing that, then 50 chapels and cathedrals don't mean that God's church is there. But as soon as someone becomes a follower of Jesus in the way the scriptures instruct, the Lord adds them to his church. *ZAP! – instant church!*



CONTACT INFORMATION:

*Please contact us if you wish to know more
or if you have any questions.*

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Instant Church!

***"Look!
That church
wasn't there
this morning."***

***"Well, it sure
is now."***



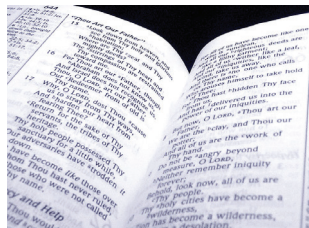
by Brett Christensen

Instant church?



How could a church be there this afternoon if it wasn't there this morning? Easy! It happens all the time. Of course, if you think of a building when you think of "church", then this sounds preposterous. But if you think of a group of people when you think of "church", then it makes perfect sense.

The usual meaning of "church" has to do with buildings for religious purposes. But in our English Bibles it is commonly used to translate a Greek word which didn't have that meaning. The Greek word meant a group of people, a gathering, an assembly or a congregation.



So when Jesus Christ said "I will build my church," he wasn't talking about erecting a building, but nurturing a group of people. He said this group would belong to him ("my church") and that he would be its founder. We can also gather from what he said that he hadn't founded it yet. But when he did, it turned out to be a unique and enduring body of people which has lasted through centuries of persecution, wars, disasters and earthly empires. Even the might of the Roman empire, which set out to destroy it, couldn't overcome this church.

People founded their own churches, trying to replace Christ's church and wipe it out. But the Lord's church is still here today. His words have proved true: "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18).

So if you want to find Christ's church, don't look for a building. Look for people. But how will you recognise this group? First, you'll have to get a description of it as it was when Christ founded it, and to do that you'll need to open the Bible, starting with the book of Acts, where we read about the beginning and growth of Christ's church.

Acts 8:1 tells of a persecution that broke out "against the church". This persecution is mentioned again in Acts 9:1 – but this time it is said to be "against the disciples of the Lord". From that we see that "the church" is simply a collective description for the followers of Jesus, like "team" is for "players". So the people you're looking for are disciples of Christ.

More characteristics of the Lord's church:

- They obey God and Christ over and above anyone else. *Acts 5:29; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 1:2*
- They imitate Christ's example, especially his love.
John 13:34-35; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 Peter 2:21-22; 1 John 2:6
- They're devoted to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer.
Acts 2:42
- They acknowledge their reliance on God's mercy and grace for forgiveness of their sins.
Romans 3:23-24; 5:2; Acts 20:32
- They're determined not to go beyond Christ's teaching, nor to let human traditions and innovations get in the way of their obedience to him. *2 John 9; Mark 7:6-9; Colossians 2:6-8*
- They make other disciples, baptising them and teaching them to obey all that Christ commanded.
Matthew 28:19-20
- They come together on the first day of the week to break bread. *Acts 20:7*
- They worship in spirit and in truth. *John 4:23-24*
- Their gatherings are conducted decently and in order, with a number of men contributing to the proceedings. *1 Corinthians 14:40,26*
- They have no "clergy / laity" distinction, as all members are considered priests.
1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:6
- Christ is their head, not someone on earth. *Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18*
- They have no organisational structure beyond local congregations.
Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5
- They draw no lines between ethnic groups or social classes. *Galatians 3:26-27*
- They're noticeably different to the world around them in the way they think and live.
Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 5:7-11; 2 Corinthians 7:1
- They collectively describe themselves in a number of ways, such as: the church of God, the household (or family) of God, the household of faith, the people of God, the body of Christ, the church of the Lord (or the Lord's church), the churches of the saints, churches of Christ, churches in Christ. (The Scriptures don't tag God's people with one particular name, but with a variety of descriptions, each of which tells us something about the nature of these people.)
Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 14:33; Galatians 6:10; 1:22; Ephesians 2:19; 4:12; 1 Peter 2:10; Acts 20:28