



The Marks of a True Church (part 1) Acts 2:36-47

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In this Chapter, Luke has recorded Peter's sermon that was presented to a group of Jews in Jerusalem only a month ½ after Jesus ascends into Heaven. Realize, Peter is fulfilling His destiny that Jesus said before the cross, the tomb or the resurrection... "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Matthew 16:18 How can we recognize a true church? What are some distinguishing characteristics that lead us to recognize it as a true church? Let us read **Acts 2:36-41**

"Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." 37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."

"Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be a doubt, a church of God exists." – **John Calvin**

The Bible provides us with a framework to examine any self-identified church and test its legitimacy. The following are eight marks of a true church given in Scripture that I believe can be helpful for us today:

- 1. The Purpose of First Baptist Church is to EXALTS CHRIST Always.** (v 38, 41)
 - The Church is made up of REGENERATED Believers in CHRIST.
 - The STRUCTURE of LEARNING the Word.
 - The SYMBOLIC act of BAPTISM.
 - The SIGN of celebrating the LORD'S SUPPER.
- 2. The Purpose of First Baptist Church is to EDIFY the SAINTS by being Devoted to FELLOWSHIP.** (v 42)
 - The Word of GOD demands us to stay devoted to each other.
 - The word of SATAN distracts us to distance ourselves away from each other.

3. The Purpose of First Baptist Church is to EXPOUND on the Holy and Inerrant WORD of God. (v 37-42)

If the Word of God is not being preached, but false doctrines or doctrines of men, then there is no true church. *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* does not hold to any major Christian teaching concerning salvation or the person of God or the person and work of Christ. It is clearly a false church. It says in the Book of Mormon “*For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.*” 2 Nephi 25:23 Similarly, Jehovah’s Witnesses teach salvation by works, not by trusting in Jesus Christ alone. If people believe these teachings, they simply will not be saved.

- PREACHING God’s WORD leads to PRACTICING godly WORSHIP.
- GOSPEL-Centered, BIBLICALLY-Sound, CONGREGATIONAL-Led Worship is the goal of gathering as the Church.

“God’s purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God.” **Ephesians 1:12**

“Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. ¹⁷ Don’t act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. ¹⁸ Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, ¹⁹ singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts.”

Ephesians 5:16-19

Worship in the church is itself fulfilling the major purpose of the church with reference to its Lord. Paul can follow with exhortation that we are to be “*making the most of the time*” with a command to be filled with the Spirit and then to be “singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart”. This is our purpose, mission, goal every time we gather.