

THE GROWTH OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

Before the Lord ascended to His throne in heaven, He commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel and make disciples – that included teaching the observance of all that He commanded (cf. Matt. 29:19-20; Mark 16:15). That is what was done. The gospel was preached, and souls were converted and saved. “And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:47) That increasing number was and is the growing body and church of Christ.

With the preaching of the gospel to all nations, congregations of Christ were gathering in their communities for the purpose and work for which Christ called them. In the beginning oneness prevailed because those assemblies of the sanctified and justified were abiding in the doctrine of Christ (cf. 2 John 9). The same message and the same traditions were being delivered “everywhere in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17). “... stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.” (2 Thess. 2:15) What the New Testament apostles and prophets taught was the Lord’s commandment. Therefore, those assemblies that were scattered in the world were spiritual gatherings of Christ contending for the one faith and proclaiming the excellencies of the One who called out of darkness into light (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9).

Today, there is much religious division. What men classify as Christendom has splintered over the centuries into various faiths, factions and sects. The Holy Spirit foretold that some Christians would depart from the faith in later times (1 Tim. 4:1), that people would tire of sound doctrine and turn away from the truth (2 Tim. 4:3, 4). The devil wants men to grow indifferent to error, to reason that division is acceptable, and to invalidate God’s word with human traditions. All churches are not “of Christ.” The Lord did not author confusion; men did. Examine the Holy Scriptures to see if the things churches teach and practice are truly from the Lord (cf. Acts 17:11). “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!...” (1 Cor. 13:5) Jesus built one called-out body for Himself. Are you a member of it?