

Is “Your” Church Approved and Authorized by Christ?

If I put a cardboard sign in my front yard that says “McDonald’s” and I start selling hamburgers and fries from my house, does that make me a legitimate McDonald’s franchisee? This may sound like a silly question but I’m trying to make a point. I would not be considered a legitimate McDonald’s franchisee because I do not have the authority or approval of the McDonald’s franchise. There are specific requirements to become a McDonald’s franchisee. I cannot build my own restaurant, make my own rules, offer my own food, etc. I have to buy a restaurant and it must operate exactly like all the other McDonald’s franchisees. What is the one constant among McDonald’s? They are all the same—the same menu, the same facilities, the same napkins, cups, wrappers, etc. They follow an exact pattern and rules. They each function separately yet they are all the same. The main difference is just the location and there may be some outward physical differences in the buildings—that’s it.

What about if I put a cardboard sign in my front yard that says “Christ’s church” and I start selling religion from my house, does that make me a legitimate church approved and authorized by Christ? People do it all the time. That is why there are literally hundreds—if not thousands—of different so-called “Christian” churches that all teach, believe, and practice different things. How can they all be approved and authorized by Christ when they are all so different from each other? God has provided us with His written Word (the Holy Bible)—His “instruction manual” or “policies and procedures”—and there are specific instructions about the church. If a so-called church does not follow the New Testament pattern of the Lord’s church, how can it possibly be approved and authorized by Christ?

We know from Revelation chapters 2 and 3 that Christ does not approve of every church. The church in Ephesus was in danger of losing their status as Christ’s church unless they repented of things they were doing that Christ did not approve. He also threatened the church in Pergamos because they were teaching false doctrine. Christ was so angry with the church in Laodicea for not doing what God commanded that Christ told them He was going to vomit them out of His mouth. We could discuss for hours all of the things the churches of Christ in the New Testament were doing wrong and how the apostles constantly had to teach, reemphasize, and rebuke them. So, it must be important to do things exactly according to God’s instructions when it comes to the church.

Does the church you are a member of follow the pattern of the New Testament church? If not, how can you think that you are saved being a member of a man-made religious organization that is not authorized or approved by Christ? After all, only those in the Lord’s church are going to be saved (Acts 2:47; I Corinthians 15:24). Many think as long as you are sincere, your worship is acceptable to God. This is simply not true. There is such a thing as vain or useless worship (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7; James 1:26). Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit (with the right attitude) and in truth (according to His instructions) (John 4:24).