



Jeff Sweeten

Thus Saith the Lord

CHURCH JUDGING

By Jeff Sweeten

It is wonderful to live in a community where residents are a people seeking God. That one can make such a judgment can be reasonably based purely on the number of church buildings in town. But how is it possible that such a verigated religious landscape could possibly reflect Divine consistency? Without exception, every one of these variously named, diversly worshiping and randomly located religious bodies would probably claim they are following Christ; but "Is Christ divided" (1 Corinthians 1:13)? The only way such a situation could possibly be explained would be to accuse God of being the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33) or, worse, that He is happy about religious chaos. This introduces another concern: if one was sincerely seeking a church that belongs to Christ, how he or she go about identifying such a church, if one actually exists?

Now, I know how uncomfortable some folks become at the prospect of their beloved church's legitimacy being scrutinized (fearing that it won't survive honest, biblical investigation?). Nevertheless, I puzzle over why it is that a thinking person would struggle with the notion that one can make correct judgments about objective truths, as one does every day in every other pursuit in life. Why is our religious preference exempt? Perhaps, it is because there is this popular but flawed assumption that if we actually identify something as religiously right or wrong, we are "judging"; and, oh, how sinful that sounds as the convenient construct is that all "judging" is always wrong. (Of course, this evidently doesn't apply to those who judge you to be wrong for judging; now, there's an irony.) This flawed position also ignores Jesus' plain statement, in which we are commanded to judge, and to do so correctly. "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Hmm. Now, there's an explanatory footnote to the "Judge not, that you be not judged" doctrine of Matthew 7:1 that is so often misrepresented, particularly since Jesus would not contradict Himself. Frankly, we can do nothing in life without making judgments. Why, even the idea of reaching out to the lost implies one has judged another to be "lost." Yet, if Jesus gives us a definition of who is lost, then we are merely doing a bit of fruit inspection (Matthew 7:16, 20), not unrighteously judging.

Therefore, when Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:21) and Paul condemned division (1 Corinthians 1:10), is it wrong to conclude that the present religious chaos cannot possibly be acceptable to God? Has He not revealed so clearly in His Word that disunity is sin?

What you and I can know is that Jesus said He would build His church (Matthew 16:18). The fact that you have the right to choose "the church of your choice" does not implicitly make the choice righteous. So, are you a member of the church of Christ's choice? Is your church in the Bible?

Thus Saith the Lord
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Park Heights Church of Christ

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Schedule of Services

SUNDAY

9:30 a.m. Bible Class
10:25 a.m. Morning Worship
1:30 p.m. Afternoon Worship

WEDNESDAY

7:00 p.m. Bible Study

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