At last count there are roughly 45,000 separate denominations in the world. No, not 45,000 thousand individual congregations or meeting houses but 45,000 separate denominational bodies complete with organizational structure.

The world is not impressed by over 45,000 varieties or brands of Christianity. They see the division and say:

* Such proves that the Bible is impossible to understand.
* Such proves that the Bible is too confusing.
* Such proves that you can prove anything by the Bible.
* Such proves that the whole thing is just a scam, and it is all about gaining power and money.

The question then, is this what Jesus wanted? **John 17:20-21**

**There is one Church:**

Jesus in **Matthew 16:18** said ***“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”*** He did not say churches and He did not say 45,000 churches. He said that He would build one church and that it would be **His** church. Not anyone else’s.

 On the day of Pentecost when the Gospel was preached in its entirety for the first time, those who believed and were baptized were added to the church that day. We read this in **Acts 2:37-41 (47 KJV *“and the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.”*).** Again, it is important to note that it does not say “a church” but the church. Which indicates that the church is one of a kind, unique, set apart, not common. There is a big difference between a white house and *the* white house.

The church is also known as the body of Christ **(Ephesians 1:22-23**). This is of note because the bible does not only speak of the church simply as the church. God uses multiple names for the church to indicate characteristics about the church. It is known as the body of Christ to signify its unity. Later, in the book of Ephesians we read in **4:4-6** that there is ***“one body and one spirit just as you were called into one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”*** Again, God through the Apostle Paul is making the point that His people should be one, undivided, just as He is.

**Distinct Marks of the Church:**

 There is roughly around Seven billion people on this planet and in a general sense we all look similar. But, we know that each person is unique. This is because each person has distinct traits and characteristics that make them well, them. The same is for the Church. The Lord’s church, the one in the bible, the God approved one, has many characteristics that make it identifiable.

* Built by Christ ***Matthew 16:16-18***
* Purchased by Christ ***Ephesians 1:5-8 cf. Acts 20:28***
* Possessed by Christ ***Ephesians 1:22-23***

Because Jesus built the church, He paid the price to have a saved people, the saved belong to Him and His headship, His authority, He leadership rules over us. What He has said we will do. What His Apostles did and taught we will do. What God has commanded we will do. This means…

* Its worship will seek to be God pleasing **John 4:23 *“But an hour is coming and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the father in sprit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.”***
* It will follow the pattern left for us in God’s word **Philippians 3:17**
	+ This means its worship will be after the patter
		- Songs of praise **Ephesians 5:19**
		- Heartful Prayer **Acts 2:42**
		- Observance of the Lords Supper **Acts 20:7**
		- Offering Freely **1 Corinthians 16:1**
		- Faithful Teaching **Acts 2:42**
	+ This means it will be organized after the pattern
		- Jesus is the only head **Ephesians 1:22-23**
		- Each congregation governed by their own Elders **1 Peter 5:1-3**
* Its concern and mission is the salvation of souls **Ephesians 3:10-12**

**Not a Building:**

 If there is one thing you take away from this lesson I hope that it is this next point I am about to make. The church is so much more than a building. Our word church comes from the Greek word Ekklesia which means a “a calling out of.” It means a group of people that has been called out into an assembly for a purpose. The church then is a group of people that has been called out of the sinful world into the body of Christ for a purpose. God has established His plan of pardon and those that obey it become part of the Church, the body of Christ.

* **1 Peter 2:9** Peter tells us that we have been called out of darkness and rescued. We brought in and now are a chosen people with a purpose, to declare the mercies and greatness of God.
* **Colossians 1:13** Here in Colossians tells us that when we are rescued out of darkness we were are placed into or transported into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son. (Church = Kingdom **cf. Hebrews 12:23-24, 28**)
* **Acts 2:47** When we submit to God it penitent obedient faith we are added to His kingdom, the body, the church. We are called out from our old life of sin and death and into the assembly of the saved.

To be outside the Church is to be outside the body of Christ. And to be outside the body is to be removed from God. Isaiah tells us in **Isaiah 59:2** that ***“But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.”*** But there is hope. The whole reason the Church exist is because Jesus came to die for you that you might be called out of sin back into fellowship with God. But friend you must die to sin if you are to live to God. Where does that happen?

**Romans 6:3-7**