

# Checking a Congregation's Credentials

Matt. 7:15-23; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11

## Introduction:

- A. Christians often find the need to worship with a different congregation - either temporarily or permanently.
  - 1. Ideally they could just find a "church of Christ" - but world is not ideal.
  - 2. Realistically we need to check more closely:
    - a. Because false religion sometimes appears as true on the surface (Matt. 7:15; 2 Cor. 11:13-15).
    - b. Must "test the spirits", not merely accept their word. (1 John 4:1).
      - (1) Do not have to question their motives - may be sincerely mistaken.
      - (2) Do have to have truth to be free. (John 8:32)
    - c. Must not practice nor encourage anything outside the doctrine of Christ. (2 John 9-11).
  - 3. Hence, we need to check a congregation's credentials before joining ourselves to it or encouraging it.
- B. We offer some suggestions for checking a church's credentials:

## Discussion:

### I. Check Beyond its Name and Claim.

- A. Jeroboam's claim. (1 Kings 12:28).
- B. False apostles' claim. (Rev. 2:2; 2 Cor. 11:13).
- C. Sardis' name. (Rev. 3:1).
- D. Lawlessness done in name of Christ. (Matt. 7:21-23)

### II. Check Beyond Personalities for Congregational Policies.

- A. Personalities of all kinds scattered throughout congregations of all persuasions.
  - 1. Cordial and Cool.
  - 2. Generous and Selfish.
  - 3. Snobbish and Meek.
  - 4. Hypocrite and Sincere.
  - 5. Godly and Ungodly.
  - 6. Faithful and Unfaithful.
- B. Personalities may or may not be a measure of the congregation's policies.
- C. Personal convictions on matters of individual application may vary, but congregational policies shared by all.

### III. Check its Compliance with the Doctrine of Christ as a Congregation.

- A. Are its items of worship found in the doctrine of Christ and limited to those items?
  - 1. Singing. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
  - 2. Prayer. (Acts 12:5)
  - 3. Preacher/teaching (Acts 20:7).
  - 4. Lord's supper in assembly on first day of week.. (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:18-26).
  - 5. Contribution on first day of week. (1 Cor. 16:1-2).
- B. Are its areas of work found in doctrine of Christ and limited to those areas?
  - 1. Evangelism. (Phil. 4:15-18; 2 Cor. 11:8).
  - 2. Edification. (Eph. 4:16).
    - a. Through worship. (1 Cor. 14:26).
    - b. Through teaching. (Eph. 4:14-15).
    - c. Through discipline. (1 Cor. 5:7).
  - 3. Benevolence to saints. (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Cor. 16; 2 Cor. 8 & 9; 1 Tim. 5:16).
- C. Is its organization found in the doctrine of Christ and limited to it?
  - 1. Congregational. (Acts 14:23; 20:17).
    - a. Without elders and deacons until men can be qualified.
    - b. Without elders and deacons after men are qualified.
  - 2. No other organization - smaller or larger than congregation.
    - a. New Testament churches cooperated with others - concurrently, not jointly.
    - b. New Testament churches neither formed nor supported any organization but the church itself.

## Conclusion:

- A. Some say, "Buyer beware."
- B. We say, "Worshiper beware."