

The Brown Street Beacon

"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,

holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)



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Are There Christians in Denominational Churches?

There has always been those among us who have advocated the idea that Christians can be found in every denomination. In times past it was popular among more liberal minded brethren to declare that the pious un-immersed, particularly those in various denominations, were saved. In some circles that error is making a comeback. Is there any truth to the notion that Christians can be found in denominational churches? Such a conclusion is a misunderstanding of, at least, two facts.

It is first a misunderstanding of what the church is. The church is made up of the saved, that is, those who have obeyed the gospel of Christ. When one obeys the gospel, he is added to the church immediately (Acts 2:47). Obedience to the gospel and church membership happens simultaneously. The final step in obeying the gospel is being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27, etc.). Thus, the Bible teaches us that we are baptized into the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Baptism doesn't add one to a denominational church. In fact, there were no denominational churches in the first century to which one could be added. The question, then, is how does a person who has been a Christian become a member of a denominational church? The answer to that question, which we will discuss in the second fact that is misunderstood, will tell us whether or not there are Christians in denominational churches. But, let's get back to the church for a moment. If a person is added to the church upon obedience to the gospel, then there is only one place where Christians can be found and that, of course, is in the church. In the New Testament, every single Christian was a member of the church of Christ. Who would doubt the validity of that statement? Now, just because men have come along and built their own churches with their own names, doctrines, practices and forms of worship, doesn't mean that true Christians can now be found in places other than the church of Christ. Scriptural baptism places people in the same place it did nearly two thousand

years ago, and that is in the church that Christ built. One is not to look in a man-made, denominational church to find Christians; one is to look where God adds them, that is, the Lord's church.

There is something else to consider about the place to find Christians are found. The church is the family of God. How does one become a part of God's family? He does so by obeying the gospel, resulting in a new birth (John 3:3-5). When a person obeys the gospel, he becomes a child of God. Where can a child of God be found? A child of God can be found in the house of God which is the church you read about in the New Testament (I Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6), not a denominational church established long after God's family came into existence.

The second misunderstanding is what constitutes a Christian. There are those who argue that obedience to the gospel results in a person being added to the church, but over the years, they say, some have left the church and have joined different denominations. Thus, there are Christians in every denomination. This is to misunderstand what a Christian is. One can't leave the church and still be a Christian. A Christian is a *FOLLOWER OF CHRIST*. Can one turn his back on the church that Christ built and still be a follower of Christ? NO! Can one join himself to a religious body that cannot be found in the scriptures, and that is practicing many things without the authority of Christ, and still be a follower of Christ? NO! The fact is, while one might leave the church and still be a child of God, he cannot do so and maintain his fellowship with God. There is such a thing as a child of God who begins to live his life as to be lost, but there is no such thing as a Christian doing so. The moment one stops following Christ, he ceases to be a Christian. And the moment a person leaves the church and joins a denomination, he stops following Christ. Therefore, not only is the church the only place one can find a Christian, but consequently one can never find a Christian in a denominational church, regardless of how pious he might be. Let us all forsake man-made churches, and associate ourselves with the Lord's church.

Don

Church Member Hitchhikers

Bob Dickey

With his thumb, a hitchhiker says, "You furnish the car, gas, attend to the repairs and upkeep, supply the insurance, and I'll ride with you. But you must be going my way, and if you have an accident, I'll sue for the damages." Sounds pretty one-sided, doesn't it?

There are hitchhikers in other places than just along the road ways. Unfortunately, there are sometimes hitchhikers in local churches. These members seem to say "You go to the Bible classes, attend all of the various assemblies, do the visitation and personal work, shoulder the responsibilities, take care of the meeting house and grounds and all of the things that need doing, and I'll go along for the ride. But if things aren't done to suit me, I will complain, criticize, and probably get out and hitchhike to another group."

You've seen them too, haven't you? You've seen professing Christians that seem to just be along for the ride. They frustrate the growth and progress of the local church. Because of indifference or lack

of total commitment, they add nothing to the furtherance of the Lord's cause. The only thing they add is more work for the faithful. Preachers and elders are usually at a loss to know how to awaken them to a sense of their personal responsibility. Many times they become so accustomed to riding the coat tails of others that they seem to know of no other way to travel.

What do we say to hitchhiking church members?" Shall we let them keep on depending on others without learning to pull their own weight? Shall we stand quietly by while they slip closer to eternity, unprepared to meet the Lord's judgment? No, someone needs to remind these 'thumbing' members that they will never be able to hitch a ride to Heaven. And going along just for the ride hinders and holds back the congregation's work. If you know of a church member hitchhiker like these we have described, why not lovingly talk to him or her about their soul and the need for their help and cooperation. Hitchhikers are not permitted on the interstate expressways today.

Let's remember that they are not allowed on the Lord's highway either. Hitchhikers, please read Matthew 25:1-46!