

Why Study Church History?

by Wayne Goff

In Quarter 2, 2013 we will be studying the history of the church since its inception. Some may wonder why we should bother to do so at all. Here are a few reasons why we should study it:

- To understand the church built and established by Jesus Christ, Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:38-47.
- To understand how the pure church fell away by corruption in church organization, Acts 20:28-31.
- To see how continued corruptions took place in the following centuries in teaching, practice, and organization, 2 Thess. 2:7-12.
- To see how corruption led to the Roman Catholic Church, 606 A.D.
- To learn **why** religious men became grossly dissatisfied with “the church” and how they attempted to “reform” it (1200-1600 A.D.).
- To see how the efforts of Martin Luther, John Calvin and other *protestors* of the Roman Catholic Church ultimately led to Protestant denominationalism (1400-1900 A.D.)
- To learn the organizational and historical connections between various denominations we see today. One may not know that the Episcopal Church in America stems from the Church of England, or that the Methodist Church is connected to the Pentecostals, the Church of God, the Assembly of God, and the Nazarenes!
- To understand what is meant by the term “Restoration” as it applies to those men who came out of denominationalism. Their plea was “back to the Bible” for all things religious. If any doctrine, practice, worship, or name was not found with biblical foundation, then it was discarded.
- To come to know why one does **not** have to trace his religious roots back down through Protestantism and Catholicism to the Lord’s church in the first century to be a valid church of Christ.
- To understand why the churches who attempted to “restore” New Testament Christianity once again became divided religiously over erroneous beliefs, practices and organizations.
- To learn **why** we must *continue* to examine everything we do and say in the light of New Testament Scriptures to be sure that we are true to the Lord Jesus, Who is the Head of His church, 1 Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17; Rev. 22:18-19.

We did not choose the religious landscape into which we were born. There has always been the pure, New Testament church, which is the kingdom of God which shall stand forever, Dan. 2:44. But a large segment of the church denigrated into an apostate church which then became the “mother” of all protestant churches we see today. These things affect us religiously today just as surely as air pollution affects our breathing today. We must be aware of our surroundings and take the necessary precautions to stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has set us free, Gal. 5:1. We do not desire to return back into the “*yoke of bondage*.”

The church built by Jesus Christ is neither “Catholic” nor “Protestant.” It is Divine, biblical and perfect. When Christians today try to **go back** to the Divine Pattern for all that we say and do *religiously*, we are not partaking in the errors of Catholicism and Protestantism, but seeking to go back before those errors and restore New Testament Christianity. It can be done because the Word of God is the “*seed*” (Lk. 8:11) planted in good and honest hearts which makes a Christian, and *only* a Christian. Then when Christians gather **together** to do **together** what God has *commanded* should be done **together**, you have a New Testament congregation.

The better we understand the religious landscape about us today in so-called “Christendom,” the better equipped we will be to be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks us a reason of the hope that is in us, 1 Peter 3:15.