

# Words of Truth

## The Lord Makes The Rules, Not The Church

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Many times people have made statements that show ignorance on the subject we are about to discuss in this study. For example, some have said statements such as these: “The church has been doing this for many years and that shows it’s right to do it. I discussed this subject with the church and everyone agreed that it’s right to do it. The church supports this missionary so I know he’s a sound preacher. The church I attended met on Wednesday nights, which is the right way. I learned this at church, so I know it’s the truth.”

The statements above all indicate that the church has some level of authority to introduce teachings, practice things not discussed in the Bible, vote for authority, and to endorse preachers. While the quotes above are common statements, none of them are biblically correct. Here is a question for all of us to consider: Do we serve the church or do we serve the Lord?

Many practice churchianity rather than Christianity. Yes, the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (I Timothy 3:15). However, the church is not the source of the truth. The Lord is the source of the truth (Deuteronomy 32:4, Psalms 31:5, and Psalms 86:15). God reveals His truth to us through His word (Psalms 33:4, John 17:17, Colossians 1:5, and I Thessalonians 2:13). The church, as the pillar and ground of the truth, is expected to uphold the truth that God revealed through His word. The church is a collective body of Christians (I Corinthians 12:27). As a collective body of Christians, we need to be sure that we realize that the church is not the head of all things, but the followers of He whom is the head of all things.

### The Church Is To Be In Subjection Rather Than A Place Of Authority

Please notice these Scriptures after which we will make some applications: *“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: **And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all...** Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as **Christ is the head of the church**: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore **as the church is subject unto Christ**, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, **That he might present it to himself a glorious church**, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish... Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath*

*delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into **the kingdom of his dear Son**: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: **all things were created by him, and for him**: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And **he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence**" (Ephesians 1:18-23, Ephesians 5:22-27, and Colossians 1:12-18).*

### Some Applications To Consider

"Churches of Christ" have long ignored the Scriptures above in many ways. "Churches of Christ" have decided terms of fellowship without allowing the Scriptures to decide with whom saints are in fellowship with (Ephesians 5:11 and I John 1:3-7). One way in which this error is practiced is by allowing or disallowing the "placement of membership" in the local church. To know whether or not one is in Christ one must know whether or not one is obeying Christ (Matthew 12:46-50 and John 14:23). If someone is a member of a congregation that does not mean they are in Christ. Remember, it is the Lord who adds the saved to His church (Acts 2:47). Men have long allowed people to be called members of the church whom have never truly obeyed the Gospel. Fellowship with God is on His terms, not whether or not the church accepts a person.

"Churches of Christ" have decided what teachings we can agree on or disagree on while all along ignoring the commands of the head of the church (I Corinthians 1:10, Philippians 2:2, Philippians 3:16, and II John 9-11). Some pervert Romans 14 wherein we are told that we can differ on authorized liberties. Nowhere in that text does the Lord say I can teach or believe something different than anyone else on issues that are not authorized liberties. An authorized liberty is something that God authorizes that we can do or choose not to do (i.e. I Corinthians 8:8). Still, there has to be authority for that action or teaching (Colossians 3:17).

"Churches of Christ" have long ignored the Lord in regard to the works of the local church. Most agree that the kingdom and the church are one in the same (Hebrews 12:22-23; 28). So, how can those folks see that the work of the kingdom is not social work (Romans 14:17; cf. John 6:26-27), yet have "potluck dinners", "Function Bible School (VBS)", "Youth Lock-Ins", etc.? Many of these same folks can see that the Lord authorizes His money to be used in aiding needy saints (Romans 15:25-27, I Corinthians 16:1-2, II Corinthians 8:1-9:13, and I Timothy 5:3-16). Yet, they choose to take the head of the church's money and spend it aiding those whom God will not even hear the prayers of (Proverbs 15:29, Proverbs 28:9, John 9:31, and I Peter 3:12). In these cases, the church has made the rules. As we've seen, that should not be so (I Corinthians 4:6)!

### Conclusion

A group of people may do "religious" things using the right name, but that does not mean those things are pleasing to Christ (Matthew 7:21-23). When people decide what they want the Lord's church to do, their worship and service becomes vain (Matthew 15:1-9). Jesus asked this question: "*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*" (Luke 6:46)? The question our Lord asked makes a lot of sense. Why pretend to be the church of Christ when people are only doing what they want to do? When churches of Christ start acting on their own they become churches of men rather than of our Lord (Colossians 2:18-23).