

“I Don’t Believe Everything My Church Teaches.”

Religious people often say: “I don’t go along with everything that my church teaches.” These people usually are sincere and concerned people who question the doctrine or practices of their churches. What does this say about the religious situation today?

First, this statement says that many churches do not base their beliefs and practices on God’s word. Some members read and study the Bible for themselves and find out that the Bible does not authorize many of the beliefs and practices of their specific church. They may also learn that we all are to speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11) and that none of us must add to or take away from the word of God (Rev. 22:18-19). These folks are between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Desiring to be loyal to the word of God and finding themselves at odds with the teaching of their church, they become selective in what they believe, rejecting their church’s teaching of specific error but staying in their church as a member.

Second, this practice emphasizes the need to go back to the first century and to New Testament Christianity. The New Testament reveals what the church was and should be (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23 and 5:22-31). By going back beyond denominationalism to the time when only the Lord’s church existed, we learn God added all Christians to the one church (Acts 2:47) and only Christians made up the one church (1 Cor. 12:27). When Christianity began, there were no divisions (John 17:20-21) and no denominations (Eph. 4:4-6).

Third, this practice violates the Bible principle that the church has no authority to formulate doctrine or teaching (1 Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim 3:16-17). No true Christian could say, “I do not believe everything my church teaches,” because the true church bases beliefs on the inspired word of God and that alone (Jude 3). If we know that a practice is unscriptural, and maintain our fellowship with those that practice it, we violate the specific teaching of 2 John 9-11: “Whosoever goes onward and abides not in the teaching of Christ, has not God . . . If any one comes unto you, and brings not this teaching . . . give him no greeting; for he that gives him greeting partakes in his evil works.”

Finally, this practice keeps people from being just Christians (1 Peter 4: 16) and belonging to the only church Christ built (Matt. 16:18) and following only God’s word (Col. 3:17) in name, organization, membership, work, worship, and unity.