

# Is Church Important (1)? By Victor Beshir

Are all Christian churches equal?

Do you get the same benefits in any church you attend?

Does it matter what church you attend?

Let me start by saying, Christ already has established His church when He was living on earth 2000 years ago. So, there is no room for new churches to come afterwards. But, when did **Christ start a church**? After He asked His disciples about their faith in Him and Peter answered Him. He said, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and **on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.**” Of course He did not build His Church on a human being like Peter but He meant that the Church is built on the rock, and as St. Paul says, the “**Rock was Christ**” (1 Corinthians 10:4). **So, the Church is built on Christ.** He then entrusted His disciples with the church. Moreover, He spent over three years with them to deliver to them not only teachings but a complete integrated package that contained everything needed for the life of the Church and of the individuals who collectively form the Church. This complete package includes practical how-to instructions on all aspects of the life of the individuals and the Church. The discipleship of the apostles was very unique since they lived continually with Christ for over three years. They watched Him and imitated Him,

If you carefully read the gospels, you will notice that there were times when Christ gave special instructions just for His disciples and other times He was teaching the public. After resurrection Christ devoted all the time for His apostles only, We read that Christ “had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, **being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God**” (Acts 1:2,3)

Although the book of Acts does not mention all these “speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” during the forty days after His resurrection, but surely we can conclude at least some of these talks from reading the book of Acts and the epistles. Here are some examples:

1- We have noticed that there was only one Church, even though every apostle evangelized in different countries. St. Paul, for example, established many churches; however, these churches were never named as separated churches from the mother Church. In fact, this was the instruction of Christ to have one Church, as St. Paul explains it in details: “*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism*”(Eph 4:4, 5). The Church continued to be united as one Church in the whole world for centuries, specifically until year 451 A.D. To differentiate churches in different locations, churches were named after big cities of the ancient world: Jerusalem, Antioch (Syria), Rome, Alexandria (Egypt), Constantinople (Currently in Turkey). All the bishops of these churches and other churches in smaller cities considered equals in rank. The call for the superiority of Rome

and its bishops over other churches and bishops came later and was rejected by other churches-it was one of the reasons behind the division of year 1052 between the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

2- The apostles only were in charge of ordaining bishops, priests, and deacons. Until the sixteenth century, no one started a church except the heretics. No one who was not a bishop ordained by other bishops claimed that he can ordain a deacon or a priest or a bishop except the heretics who separated themselves from the one Church because of their unacceptable new teaching that was not delivered from the apostles and was not acceptable by the Church. Moreover, the apostles' instructions were given to the bishops only to give them the ability to ordain others. Only the bishops were given such gifts, although the church was full of pious people and well-educated people in the matters related to Christianity.

Now we need to ask the question: "From where did the apostle come up with the ideas of having bishops, priests, and deacons?"

If it was from one person, most likely we could have heard about it, as it happened when some people demanded that the gentiles who accepting Christianity should be circumcised first (Review Acts 15). However, since we heard no arguments, concerns, or names of who established this kind of order in the church, then we easily conclude that this system was established by given instructions from Christ Himself.

### ***What Does the New Testament Say About the Church?***

#### ***First: The Church is One***

As we already established in previous articles on this face book's page that there was only one Church in the whole world until year 451 A.D. No body dared to start a new church or to separate a group of people from the mother Church except the heretics. This is clearly says that the church should always be one, and only one, and this one Church should be the continuation of the mother Church that started on the Pentecost Day (Acts 2).

#### ***But, why the church should be one?***

The answer of this question is very simple, because the teachings and practice of the apostles have said that and they practiced it, which was originally established by the Lord Himself through His teachings and also through His prayer, "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that **they may be one just as We are one**" (John 17: 22).

*(To be continued)*