



One Bible but many churches

Why are there so many different churches all claiming to believe the one Bible? Each church has its own set of beliefs and teachings. Can the Bible really be so open to interpretation? And how can you decide which church to join?

One Bible

There are thousands of editions of the Bible. It has been translated into 2000 languages; in English alone, hundreds of different translations have appeared. Yet every Bible has the same essential message.

Most churches don't have their own special Bible version. They use the same Bibles that you can buy off the shelf at any good bookshop. So how is it that they can come to such different conclusions?

Many Churches

Make no mistake, the many Christian churches *are* different. True, they are alike in some respects, but the differences in both teaching and practice are real enough.

For example, take the matter of women priests—an issue that is dividing churches today. Some churches teach that only males should lead a service of worship. They base this on verses such as this from Paul's letter to Timothy:

I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. (1 Timothy 2:12)

Other churches claim this does not apply today, and they teach that any suitable person, male or female, may lead a service. Still others hold different views again.

Baptism is another example. Some churches follow the Bible command that all members must be baptized:

Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ

for the forgiveness of your sins.

(Acts 2:38)

Other churches say this is optional. At the time of Jesus and the apostles, all baptism was by full immersion and it was only for mature believers. Some churches still consider this essential. But over the years, baptism of infants has crept in and many churches use sprinkling instead of full immersion.

Bible teaching or church authority

However, it is not because the Bible is unclear that churches hold different views. As can be seen in the examples above, the differences arise because of the differences in emphasis placed on church authority and Bible teaching. Some churches say only the Bible can be used to determine truth. Others say that we may reject or modify some Bible teachings in the light of our culture and society, or because of the teaching of church leaders.

A Bible-based church

The Christadelphians believe that it is essential to learn God's truth from the Bible alone. So when the Bible says that only men are to lead a worship service, that is what we do. When the Bible says that we must first believe the gospel, then be baptized by full immersion, that is the way we do it.

Almost all the differences between the churches come down to either accepting Bible teaching as it is, or modifying it in the light of church writings or trends in society. We prefer to stick to the scriptures.

This leaflet has been produced by the *Dandenong Bible Education Centre*. Check out our website at www.dandenongbec.org.au. If you would like a free booklet on this subject, or information about the beliefs and activities of the Christadelphians, write to us at ask@dandenongbec.org.au or to PO Box 2076, Dandenong East VIC 3175. Bible quotations in this leaflet are taken from the New International Version.