The Churches Of Christ Salute You

Intro: Paul wrote, “Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you” as recorded in Romans 16:16. Throughout the world, religion is found in every land; Churches abound on every hand. In the days of Paul religion abounded (Acts 17:22-23 “Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. 23For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you”). However, the only one acceptable to God was Christianity and the only churches of the New Testament were churches of Christ. This principle is still true today. True churches of Christ exist today and can be recognized among the many human institutions claiming to be the church Christ established. So let us consider churches of Christ in the New Testament.

I. Divine In Origin

A. Jesus is Divine.

1. John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

2. Heb. 1:3 “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;”

B. He is the founder and head of the church.

1. Mat. 16:16-18 “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

2. 1 Pet. 2:6-7 “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture [Isa. 28:16], Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 7Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,“

3. 1 Cor. 3:11 “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

C. His church is thus Divine in origin.

1. Col. 1:13-18 “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: 15Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16For 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: 17And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18And 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.”

2. It is His body.

a. Eph. 1:20-23 “Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21Far 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: 22And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

b. Col. 1:18 “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.”

3. It is not a sect or a denomination.
D. To be a member of any other religious institution for salvation results in condemnation.

1. Mat. 15:13 “But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”

2. John 12:48-50 “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.”

II. Apostolic in Doctrine

A. The early church followed the teachings of the apostles in all things.

1. Acts 2:42 “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

2. 2 John 9 “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”

B. They did only those things that God had authorized.

1. They recognized authority originates from either God or man; Mat. 21:23-27 “And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? 24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? 26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. 27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”

2. Col. 3:17 “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

3. They did it without alteration

a. Gal. 1:6-9 “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

b. Rev. 22:18-19 “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

C. They were called Christians and they were Christians only

1. Isa. 62:2 “And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.”

2. Acts 11:26 “And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”

3. Only Christians; 1 Pet. 4:16 “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”

D. Referred to the church by Divine designations

1. Rom. 16:16 “Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.”
2. The church; Acts 8:1 “And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.”
3. Church of God; Acts 20:28 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
4. Church of the firstborn; Heb. 12:23 “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,”
5. Kingdom of God; John 3:3 “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
6. Kingdom of Christ (His dear Son); Col. 1:13 “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”
7. Kingdom of heaven; Mat. 16:19 “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
8. Body of Christ; Eph. 4:12 “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”
9. Bride of Christ; Eph. 5
10. All human names were forbidden; 1 Cor. 1:11-13 “For it hath been declared unto me, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. 12Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. 13Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”

E. Preached unity

1. Eph. 4:1-6 “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”
2. Condemned division and false doctrine and teachers
   a. False teaching brought division, so it was condemned.
   b. Rom. 16:17-18 “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 19For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”
   c. Tit. 3:10-11 “A man that is an heretick [divisive man—NKJV, factious man—ASV] after the first and second admonition reject; 11Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself”

F. Taught regarding the church:

1. Jesus died for the church
   a. Acts 20:28 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
   b. Eph. 5:25 “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;”
2. The essentiality of the church for salvation
   a. Eph. 5:23 “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.”
b. Acts 2:47 “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

3. Only the faithful in the church would be saved
   a. Eph. 5:26-27 “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27That 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.”
   b. 1 Cor. 15:58 “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

G. Only way to get into Christ was by baptism
1. Baptism is an immersion or burial
   a. Col. 2:12 “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”
   b. Rom. 6:4 “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

2. Baptism is for the remission of sins/salvation
   a. Acts 2:38 “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
   b. 1 Pet. 3:21 “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:”

3. Baptism is the act that places us into Christ
   a. Rom. 6:3-4 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”
   b. Gal. 3:26-27 “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

4. Thus, faith only or faith alone is useless
   a. Jam. 2:19-24 “Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”
   b. It must be faith that works through love:
      (1) Gal. 5:6 “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”
      (2) 1 The. 1:3 “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;”

III. Spiritual In Worship
A. John 4:23-24 “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”
   1. Only those who worship in spirit and in truth are acceptable to God.
   2. Truth is only found in the Word of God; John 17:17 “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
B. They worshiped every Sunday

1. Acts 20:7 “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”

2. 1 Cor. 16:1-2 “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

C. Their worship included:

1. Partaking the Lord’s Supper
   a. Acts 20:7 “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”
   b. 1 Cor. 11:23-29 “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”

2. Singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
   a. Eph. 5:19 “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”
   b. Col. 3:16 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”
   c. No mechanical instruments were used; the instrument used is the human heart.

3. They gave as they were prospered
   a. 1 Cor. 16:1-2 “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”
   b. Tithing was not practiced, as it was part of the Old Law that had been nailed to the cross.

4. They preached
   a. Acts 2:42 “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
   b. Acts 20:7 “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”

5. They prayed to the Father through the mediatorship of Christ
   a. 1 Thes. 5:17 “Pray without ceasing.”
   b. 1 Cor. 14:15 “What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”

6. They practiced pure and undefiled religion; Jam. 1:27 “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

7. They were active in carrying the Gospel to every creature
   a. Acts 8:4 “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”
b. Col. 1:23 “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;”

c. They took the Great Commission seriously.

d. They knew man’s condition if they did not obey the Gospel; 2 Cor. 5:10-11 “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 11Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.”

IV. GODLY IN LIVING

A. 2 Pet. 1:3-4 “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: ‘Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

B. They realized their citizenship was in heaven.

1. Phi. 3:20 “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:”

2. Heb. 3:1 “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;”

C. They realized they were pilgrims and sojourners on the earth.

1. 1 Pet. 1:17 “And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:”

2. 1 Pet. 2:11-12 “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 12Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

D. They knew they must abstain from fleshly lust and live righteous lives.

1. Tit. 2:11-14 “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

2. Our lives must reflect God’s nature:

a. Reflecting God’s light:

   (1) Mat. 5:14-16 “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

   (2) Eph. 5:8 “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”

   (3) 1 Pet. 2:9 “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

b. 1 Pet. 1:15-16 “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

c. 1 John 3:3 “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

d. Mat. 5:48 “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”
3. We must separate ourselves from all sin.
   a. 2 Cor. 6:17; 7:1 “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,… 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”
   b. Rev. 18:4 “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

4. Those who continued in sin were withdrawn from.
   a. 1 Cor. 5: 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 “And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you…. 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus…. 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:… 9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:… 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat…. 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”
   b. 2 The. 3:6, 14 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us…. 14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”
   c. Tit. 3:10-11 “A man that is an heretick [factious or divisive] after the first and second admonition reject; 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.”

Conclusion: The churches of Christ in the first century turned the world upside down by preaching the truth of God’s Word. When we sow the seed of the kingdom, the same can happen today. That same Word will produce the same church of Christ as was in the New Testament. If the religious group you are a part of is not the church of Christ, you need to change before it is too late or else you will be lost. You also need to allow the Scriptures to control your life so you will live righteously and godly in the present world.