

“Forget the Church – Follow Jesus”

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Thus screamed the cover of *Newsweek* (April 9, 2012). The cover pointed to an article inside (by Andrew Sullivan) titled: “The Forgotten Jesus.” Its subtitle encapsulates the article’s thrust:

Christianity has been destroyed by politics, priests, and get rich evangelists. Ignore **them** and embrace **Him**.

Sullivan’s article reflects his liberal bias toward the New Testament and its authority. However, we grant him the point that Jesus has largely been forgotten in what men call “Christianity” today.

Jesus’ doctrine knows nothing of the hopeless multitude of schisms between Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant entities. Nor did He ever envision the thousands of distinct Protestant factions. Given the modern emanation called “Christianity,” it is hard to argue with Sullivan’s advice: “Forget the church—follow Jesus,” radical as it may sound.

However, the very concept of “church” (i.e., organized religion) seems superfluous to him. In this regard, Sullivan violates a cardinal rule of logic: The **abuses** of a **valid concept** cannot rightly be used to reject or oppose the **concept itself**.

That which now masquerades as “Christianity” and/or “the church” bears no resemblance to the religion/church predicted and depicted in the Bible. Unlike Sullivan, our outcry against “the church” is not against the concept, but against the variegated **prostitution** of it. The **concept** is solidly Scriptural:

- Jesus said: “I will build my church” — only one (Mat. 16:18).
- It began on Pentecost day when people heard the Gospel, believed in Him, repented of their sins, and were baptized in order to be cleansed by His shed blood (Acts 2:37–47).
- He purchased the church (i.e., those who are in it) with His blood, redeeming them from sin (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18–19).
- The church worshiped each Lord’s day by...
 - singing songs of praise and exhortation (Eph. 5:19),
 - praying to the Father (Acts 2:42),
 - hearing the Word expounded (Acts 20:7),
 - giving their money (1 Cor. 16:1–2),
 - partaking of the Lord’s supper to memorialize His death (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17ff).

- While the church helped the helpless (Gal. 6:10), its principal work was preaching the Gospel (Mark 16:15–16).

Jesus and His church (as **He** built it) are inseparable, as are husband and wife (Eph. 5:22–32). The concept, *Jesus, yes; the church, no*, is fundamentally anti-Scriptural when **His** church is under consideration. The Bible teaches that those who truly follow Jesus will be in His church: So “The church, no; Jesus, no.”

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it appeared in the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, Denton, TX, June 8, 2012].

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