**The Church In 1492**

(by Kent Heaton)

The world of 1492 was very small. Man knew very little about the earth as we know it today. Christopher Columbus sailed this important year with a crew of 87 to discover a new world. His adventure literally changed the face of the world and man came to realize the world was a much larger place. The world of 1492 was very different in regards to religion. We are familiar with the multitude of churches in our community. Today there are hundreds of different churches that fill the landscape. The Bible is interpreted according to current thoughts and understanding of doctrine. But how does 1492 fit into this formula?

In almost every community, there are varied types of churches that bear different names with their own creed books and dogmas and beliefs. There are churches called Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Church of Christ, Mormon, Nazarene, Jehovah Witness, Seventh Day Adventist, Catholic, Episcopalian and a myriad of differing forms of faith systems. In 1492, Columbus would not find a Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Mormon, Nazarene, Jehovah Witness, Seventh Day Adventist and Episcopalian church. At best, the Lutheran church was still 38 years away; the Presbyterian did not form until 1535; John Smyth established the Baptist church 115 years later and John Wesley organized the Methodist church 237 years after Columbus sailed to the new world.

The Roman Catholic Church had been in existence for centuries as the apostate church prophesied by the Holy Spirit in **1 Timothy 4**. Other churches such as the Mormon, Jehovah Witness and Seventh Day Adventist were nearly 400 years away from beginning. When Columbus sailed in 1492, the modern day representation of *“worship the church of your choice”* was non-existent. Yet – there were in 1492 people of God devoted to Christ who worshiped in the simple form of the New Testament pattern throughout the known world. How do we know this?

The church of the Lord began in **Acts 2** on the day of Pentecost. It was called the ***“church”*** (**Acts 2:47**); ***“churches of Christ”*** (**Romans 16:16**); ***“church of God”*** (**1 Corinthians 1:2**); ***“churches in Judea which were in Christ”*** (**Galatians 1:22**); ***“the body”*** (**Ephesians 1:22,23**); ***“saints in Christ Jesus”*** (**Philippians 1:1**); ***“church of the living God”*** (**1 Timothy 3:15**); ***“church of the firstborn”*** (**Hebrews 12:23**); among other descriptive terms. The book of **Acts** is filled with the early work of the church and the epistles show the fulfillment of that early work. This pattern continues to this day by those who follow the New Testament pattern given by God concerning His church.

It is important to understand that man has created a varied form of doctrine that has suited his own needs and wisdom of interpretation creating a myriad of churches. Does it matter if a church is not found in the Bible yet found in the history of man as beginning by man? If a man lived in 1246 could he worship in the same manner as people do today with the many churches? God has given a simple book to follow and understand for all men – those living in the year 1246, 1492 or 2006 – or those living in 3006 (if the Lord wills). The Hebrew writer said the kingdom of his day ***“cannot be moved”*** (**Hebrews 12:28**). This kingdom has remained for nearly 2,000 years. This kingdom is the church patterned after the New Testament alone.

**Is It Old, New, Or True?**

(by Doy Moyer)

Being *“liberal”* or *“conservative”* is not the same as being biblical. Sometimes I fear that we evaluate a doctrine or practice based on whether we find it *“liberal”* or *“conservative”* rather than whether it is biblical and true. If it has that “liberal” ring to it, then we who are more conservative feel that we need to oppose it. Others may feel disinclined toward a position because it sounds too “conservative” for them. But “liberal” or “conservative,” besides being too vague, are not appropriate measures for judging truth. Truth must be judged on its own merits, based upon what Scripture actually teaches. This principle can be seen in **Acts 17**.

**1. There were *“conservatives”* who refused to hear anything new (vv 1-9).** Some of the Jews in Thessalonica did not want to hear about Jesus and the resurrection. They became jealous, accusing Paul and his companions of turning the world upside down.

When we close our minds to hearing something new to us, we put ourselves in the same basic position of these men who became so upset at the gospel. They could have said that the resurrection sounded too new, too radical, too non-traditional. They wanted to protect the status quo, and this mentality did not bode well for them. Neither will it bode well for us. Protecting the status quo of traditional is pointless when it opposes truth.

**2. There were *“liberals”* who only wanted to hear new things (vv 16-34).** The Athenians were interested only in telling and hearing new things. They weren't interested in anything traditional. On these grounds they were willing to listen to Paul. However, many would only listen until that *“new thing”* demanded a change in their behavior as they were called upon to repent. Once the resurrection was brought into it, which demanded repentance, they began to sneer.

“New things” have their limits, even for those who consider themselves tolerant. Sometimes those who pride themselves on being open-minded, liberal, and tolerant, will quickly close their minds when their worldview is seriously challenged. It is one thing philosophically to consider a different view; it is quite another matter when that position challenges one to make fundamental changes to comply with God’s will. That’s one thing about the gospel: it will not allow us to rest easy and comfortable with our position, no matter how open we are. There is no real value to being open-minded to new things when we shut ourselves down to actual truth.

**3. There were noble-minded people who just wanted truth (vv 10-15).** Sometimes the truth is indeed between the extremes. ***“Now these were more noble- minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so”*** (**vs. 11**). They were not evaluating what they heard based on whether or not they ever heard something before. They weren’t asking, *“is it old?”* or *“is it new?”* They were asking, *“is it true?”* This is noble.

Truth stands on its own. It is not, in itself, “conservative” or “liberal.” It is just truth, and truth is what we need eagerly to receive. *“Examining the Scriptures daily”* is the mark of those who seek truth.

Rather than being committed to being “liberal” or “conservative,” let’s be committed to truth. Let’s choose the honorable path exemplified by the Bereans. Let’s choose the way that God labels as noble-minded.