An open Bible is shown in a grayscale, slightly blurred style. The text 'Where is the church that Jesus built?' is overlaid in a large, black, serif font. The Bible's pages contain faint, mirrored text, including 'PSALM 105:3' and 'Glory in his holy name: let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice! Lord rejoice! seek the Lord and his presence will be remembered. Remember his presence and his glory in the world. He has the power of the world and the world is under his power. He has the power of the world and the world is under his power. He has the power of the world and the world is under his power.'

Where is the  
church that Jesus  
built?

# Who was Jesus

- He was a historical figure
- He came to earth as the promised Messiah
- He claimed divine standing, and his disciples believed it
- He came to offer himself as a sacrifice for sin and a source of salvation
- He called people from all nations to follow as his disciples

## Where does the church fit in?

# What do we usually mean by “church?”

- The building where I worship?
- The group where I worship?
- The “denomination” to which my group belongs?
  - American Heritage: “A large group of religious congregations united under a common faith and name, usually organized under a single administrative and legal hierarchy.”
  - Collins English: “A group **having a distinctive interpretation** of a religious faith and usually **its own organization**.”
  - Oxford: “A recognized **autonomous branch** of the Christian church.”
- ekklesia (ek-klay-see'-ah); from a compound of NT:1537 and a derivative of NT:2564; a calling out, i.e. **a popular meeting**, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or **Christian community of members** on earth or saints in heaven or both)
- “Called out” from the general population for a specific purpose (Secular – Acts 19:32, Spiritual – Mtt. 16:18)

# “Jesus didn’t talk about the church”

- Matthew 16:13-18

- “Will build” – hadn’t happened yet, but Jesus confirmed it would come
- It would prevail against “the gates of Hell,” or “Hades” – death
- Jesus promise to his followers: “that they may have life, and have it abundantly”, John 10:10 – “I am the resurrection and the life,” 11:25-26

- When did the building take place?

- The promises offered by Christ were not available until the sacrifice had been offered
- Church purchased with his blood, Acts 20:28
- Instructed his apostles to be his witnesses after his ascension, Acts 1:1-4, 6-8
- When the covenant was in place with his people, Hebrews 9:15-26
- The Lord added the saved to the church, Acts 2:47

# And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved – Acts 2:41-47

- Who is “their”?

- V. 41 – those who received Peter’s words (v. 40: “Save yourselves”)
- V. 40 – they received the word, were baptized and “added”
- Added to what? To those who already had received the word and were baptized, who already believed, v. 1, 1:15
- After believing, they “devoted themselves” to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers, v. 42
- “All who believed” – the group of men and women who had at one time been distinct, but now were united by fellowship
- They were recognized by all as being of one heart and purpose, praising God, worshipping and taking care of each other

# When I have been baptized into Christ

- I am now a part of the Lord's body, 1 Cor. 12:13
- I have been cleansed of my sins, Acts 22:16
- I have put on Christ, Galatians 3:27
- I have been united with him in his death; I have been raised to walk in new life, Romans 6:3
- Can I “add myself” to the Lord's church?

# The church comprises those who have life in Christ

- “... according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to **the church**, which is his body, **the fullness of him who fills** all in all.” - Ephesians 1:19-23
  - “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” - John 15:4-5

# How is the church organized? Is it divided?

- We read about a plurality of churches, I Cor. 14:34, 16:19, Gal. 1:2, etc. – were they denominations?
  - The churches worked together to support their members, II Cor. 8:18
  - They were consistent in doctrine, I Cor. 4:17, 11:16, 2 Thes. 2:13-15
  - They supported the same preaching, 2 Cor. 11:8
  - Not all churches were “good” churches!
- What did they have in common? Were they all practicing exactly the same things? But what was it that made them the Lord’s church?
- Still nothing about what we would consider denominations – no boundaries separating one church from another

# What are the branches? John 15:4-7

- Christ is the head of individuals, I Cor. 12:20, 27, Eph. 4:9-16, Col. 1:18, 2:19
- The word abides in individuals, John 8:31, Eph. 3:17, Col. 3:16
- We are judged as individuals, Rom. 11:13-20, 14:10, 2 Cor. 5:10
- There is no “pluralistic” relationship in the body of Christ other than the church, Eph. 1:22
- Most importantly: because God didn’t want them!
  - John 17:11, 21 – “so that the world may know that you sent me”
  - Is Christ divided? I Cor. 1:13
  - If someone taught contrary to the revealed word, they were a false teacher, not “part of another denomination”, 2 John 7-11, I Tim. 1:18-20

# Does that mean where I worship doesn't matter?

- If the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, would we consider a local church to be “sound” if it were teaching anything other than God’s plan of salvation?
  - If my church is unwilling to teach the truth on this issue, can it be trusted in others?
  - Is being a “sound church” just about teaching the truth? Rev. 2:1-5
- We aren’t saved or lost based on who we worship with (Corinth, Sardis, others)
- But we can severely damage our spiritual health if we listen to the wrong teachers, I Cor. 15:33, 2 Tim. 4:3, II Peter 2:1-2

# What about churches of Christ?

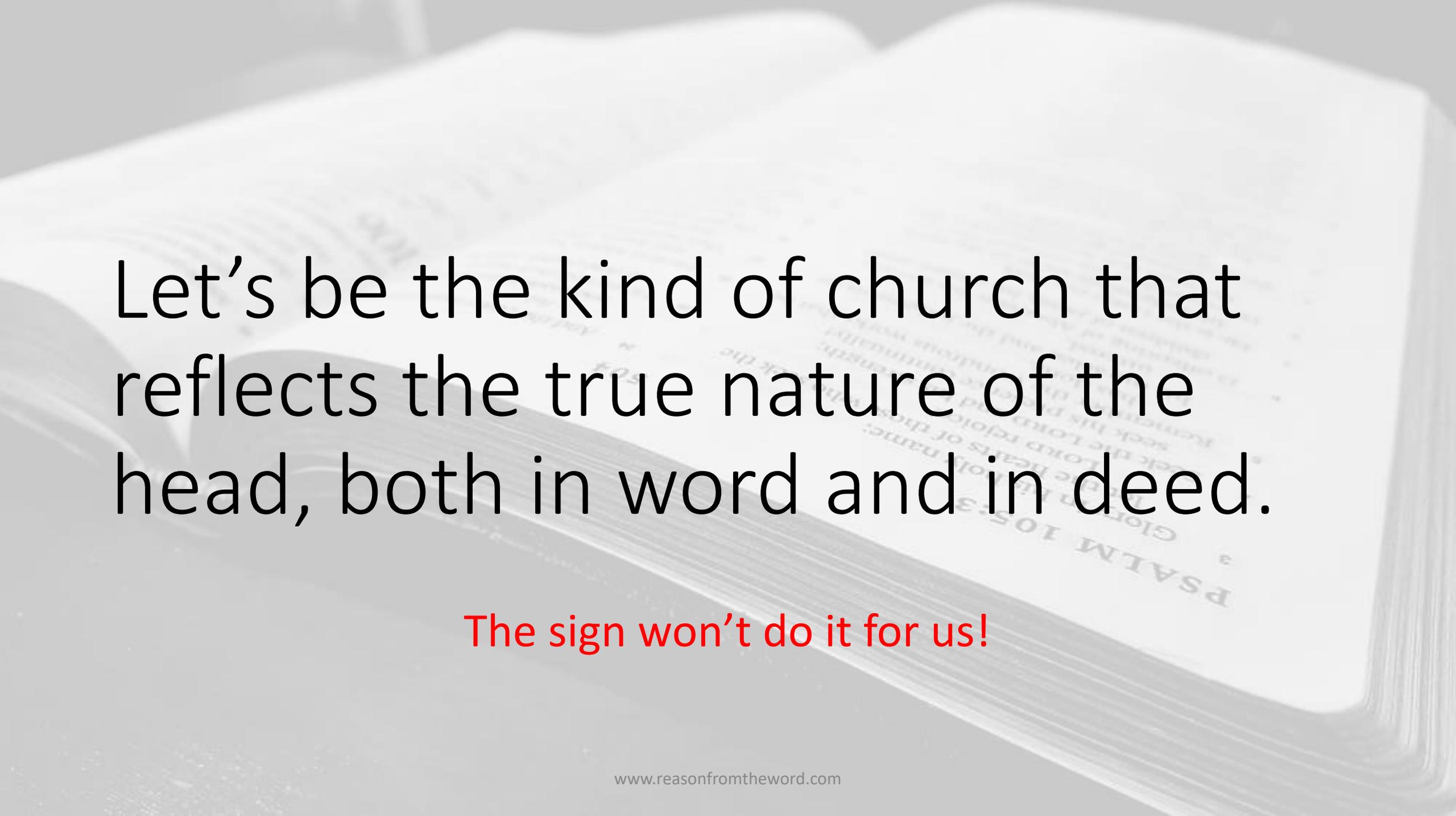
Is it possible to be part of the Lord's church and still be a denomination?

- Does the sign on our door make us the church?
- Does doing things “the way we’ve always done them in the Church of Christ” make us the church?
- Can we claim Christ as our only head, but still have a denominational mindset?
  - What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ," – I Cor. 1:12
- Do we judge someone's salvation on whether they have been “added to the church?” Or whether they worship with the right group?
  - Mark 9:38-41, Matt. 15:9
  - Do we convert to Christ? Or to the Church of Christ?

**“To what church do I belong – God’s or man’s?”**

*We don't "choose" which one we join; God either adds us or He does not*

- Does “my church” teach that I need to obey the gospel? (2 Thes. 1:8, 1 Peter 4:17)
- Does “my church” truly teach the obedience of faith? (Rom. 1:5, 16:26, 1 Peter 3:21)
  - Acts 19:1-5 – those who had been baptized by John had to be baptized again. Why?
  - Jesus, Peter and Paul all taught that baptism was necessary for salvation. Does it matter if I really believe that?
  - By whose name (whose authority) am I baptized? 1 Cor. 1:14
- If I truly believe the gospel, and have not been baptized for the remission of my sins, I either don't really believe it, or I haven't really heard it!

An open book is shown in a grayscale, slightly blurred background. The text is overlaid on the pages. The main text is in a large, black, sans-serif font. A secondary line of text is in a smaller, red, sans-serif font. At the bottom, there is a small, gray, sans-serif URL.

Let's be the kind of church that  
reflects the true nature of the  
head, both in word and in deed.

The sign won't do it for us!