Checking a Congregation’s Credentials  
Matt. 7:15-23; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11

Introduction:
A. Christians often find the need to worship with a different congregation - either temporarily or permanently.
   1. Ideally they could just find a “church of Christ” - but world is not ideal.
   2. Realistically we need to check more closely:
      a. Because false religion sometimes appears as true on the surface (Matt. 7:15; 2 Cor. 11:13-15).
      b. Must “test the spirits”, not merely accept their word. (1 John 4:1).
         1) Do not have to question their motives - may be sincerely mistaken.
         2) Do have to have truth to be free. (John 8:32)
      c. Must not practice nor encourage anything outside the doctrine of Christ. (2 John 9-11).
   3. Hence, we need to check a congregation’s credentials before joining ourselves to it or encouraging it.
B. We offer some suggestions for checking a church’s credentials:

Discussion:
I. Check Beyond its Name and Claim.
   A. Jeroboam’s claim. (1 Kings 12:28).
   B. False apostles’ claim. (Rev. 2:2; 2 Cor. 11:13).
   C. Sardis’ name. (Rev. 3:1).
   D. Lawlessness done in name of Christ. (Matt. 7:21-23)

II. Check Beyond Personalities for Congregational Policies.
   A. Personalities of all kinds scattered throughout congregations of all persuasions.
      1. Cordial and Cool.
      2. Generous and Selfish.
      3. Snobbish and Meek.
      4. Hypocrite and Sincere.
      5. Godly and Ungodly.
      6. Faithful and Unfaithful.
   B. Personalities may or may not be a measure of the congregation’s policies.
   C. Personal convictions on matters of individual application may vary, but congregational policies shared by all.

III. Check its Compliance with the Doctrine of Christ as a Congregation.
   A. Are its items of worship found in the doctrine of Christ and limited to those items?
      1. Singing. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
      4. Lord’s supper in assembly on first day of week. (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:18-26).
      5. Contribution on first day of week. (1 Cor. 16:1-2).
   B. Are its areas of work found in doctrine of Christ and limited to those areas?
      1. Evangelism. (Phil. 4:15-18; 2 Cor. 11:8).
      2. Edification. (Eph. 4:16).
         a. Through worship. (1 Cor. 14:26).
         c. Through discipline. (1 Cor. 5:7).
      3. Benevolence to saints. (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Cor. 16; 2 Cor. 8 & 9; 1 Tim. 5:16).
   C. Is its organization found in the doctrine of Christ and limited to it?
         a. Without elders and deacons until men can be qualified.
         b. Without elders and deacons after men are qualified.
      2. No other organization - smaller or larger than congregation.
         b. New Testament churches neither formed nor supported any organization but the church itself.

Conclusion:
A. Some say, “Buyer beware.”
B. We say, “Worshiper beware.”