



Comparing Fruit

A local utility company prints a notice each month in their bills concerning the selection of an alternate energy provider. This statement declares that a comparison must be “apples to apples”. We understand this to mean that the product and delivery of services from other companies must be identical in order to be considered as providers of equal merit. In religion this same principle also holds true, or should. The selection of a church for many depends on several factors that individuals consider before making a commitment to an organization. A similar process takes place when one shops for a new car. Multiple dealerships are visited, models, manufacturers and makes of vehicles are compared for their various features before a final selection is made. Eventually one will choose an energy provider, church or car based on personal preferences. The common denominators are usually affordability, aesthetic value and integrity of any offers that are made. When it comes to the selection of a religious organization it should be apples to apples but one critical factor is routinely ignored. Most view all churches as the same and an appraisal of said organization is made based on the elements discussed above. One component that is overlooked is what God has to say about one’s choice of a church and what the scriptures teach on the subject. When we compare the doctrine found in the New Testament to the beliefs and practices of the majority of religious organizations we find that there is a wide range of differences. In essence, the comparison, when we include what the Bible has to say about it, is apples to oranges, not apples to apples. That is to say, there is no sound basis for comparison between what God says and what many teach as doctrine. In the example of energy companies, we would not compare a gas service with an electric supplier. Likewise, we would not compare a family vehicle with a commercial truck made for large loads. We understand the differences when it comes to spending our hard earned dollars and we desire to have the best deal we can find that will meet our needs. Do you understand what the Bible teaches about the church well enough to make a proper comparison? The problem that most have is they lack a working knowledge of what the scriptures teach on a number of essential subjects. Some of those essentials include how one becomes a Christian. Entry into the Lord’s church is based on true obedience when one hears, understands and obeys the Gospel as prescribed in the scriptures. We have specific statements concerning this process and examples to

demonstrate how believers were saved. Christ laid this out clearly in his directives to his disciples (**Matt 28.18-20, Mark 16.15-16**). Those who believed and repented of their sins were baptized into Christ (**Acts 2.38**) and were thus added to the church by God (**Acts 2.47**). They put on Christ through baptism (**Gal 3.27**) and were raised to walk in newness of life (**Rom 6.3-4**). After obeying the Gospel we have hope and the promise of a home with God (**John 14.1-3**) if we live faithfully (**Rev 2.10**). Having done these things we become children of God. In the religious world churches will teach a number of ways that one becomes a part of their organization or are “saved”. The terms of that “salvation” however are not in line with what we read in the scriptures. When we compare these teachings we may be surprised that what we have been told is not in harmony with the word of God. We are no longer comparing apples to apples, but are attempting to make oranges, grapes and other things look and sound like apples. That does not work in the real world. We cannot pay the price of apples when we are purchasing bananas, nor are we able to contact the energy suppliers and tell them on what terms we will accept their services. We understand this in our personal business transactions but we somehow believe that we can create our own terms in the matter of salvation. Apples are not the same as grapes or any other type of fruit. God will not recognize any religious body that does not adhere to His commands. Christ stated that if we love him we will keep his commandments (**John 14.15**), not just the ones that we find satisfying. We would not accept delivery of a vehicle we have purchased if the transmission has been removed, but there are many who will accept a false doctrine that cannot get them to Heaven. Christ stated, *“Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”* (**Matt 15.13**). The religious leaders of Christ’s day had exchanged the doctrine of God for their own and were condemned for it (**Matt 15.19**). God knows the difference. Anything other than the real thing is just bad fruit.