

What Is the Church?

Introduction

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:36-47

1. The question is an important one. In the world today, people use the word “church” in several ways.
 - A. They use it to describe a building (i.e., “The church is located on Harvard Street”).
 - B. Some will lump every denomination together and describe it as a church.
(i.e., “The church in America...” or, “The church says ...”)
 - C. Still others use the term in describing religion in general (i.e., “The church is not important, but being spiritual is...” Or “My church is the great outdoors ...”).
2. This is enough to show us that people in our culture use the word church in ways God never intended. Using the word “church” in these ways result in confusion since men are defining the word as they please.
 - A. Did God ever talk about the church? What did He say?

The Word “church” in Scripture

1. The word “church” is used often in the Scriptures.
 - A. It is found 79 times in the New Testament. The plural (“churches”) is located in 36 verses in the New Testament. For God to use a term 115 times in Scripture, it must have significance.

2. **What can we know about this term and how it is applied to us today?**
 - A. **The word “church” means (“ekklesia”) meaning: “the called out.”**
 - B. **From what were they called? The context of the passage must answer that question.**
 - 1) **Sometimes the word “ekklesia” is used to describe a confused, lawless mob (Acts 19:32). In the same chapter, “ekklesia” was used to describe a lawful gathering (Acts 19:39).**
 - 2) **This should not bring us confusion, but show that “ekklesia” means certain ones were “called out” for different reasons.**
3. **Having defined the word “church,” how do we apply it in a spiritual sense?**
 - A. **When Christ promised, “I will build my church,” in Matthew 16:18, He did not promise a building, an unruly mob, a nation of people, etc.**
 - 1) **Rather, He promised to start a “called out” group of people to build a relationship with them. This is why the Scripture refers to His church as his body.**
Colossians 1:18, 24
Ephesians 1:22-23

- B. These called out people who compose His church are not bound by national lines or ethnic groups, for when the Lord purchased His church with His blood (Acts 20:28), that blood was shed for all people.**

Matthew 26:28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

Hebrews 5:9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

- 1) For this reason, we read about only one church in Scripture.**

Matthew 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Colossians 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Ephesians 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;

- a. This is a relationship and a blessing from which people worldwide can partake.**

The “Church” is the Body of Christ

1. Another reason we know this church (“ekklesia”) is different from the other descriptions we have found in Acts 7 and 19 is because to be considered a part of this “ekklesia” (Christ’s called out people), **the Lord must add you to this body.**

Acts 2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

- A. This is not something done by men, but by God. He adds the saved to His “ekklesia” and none of the unsaved.
 - 1) Only saved people are in this called-out group. This is not because the church is your Savior, but because the church is the relationship in which saved people dwell!
 - 2) It happens when I submit to the Lord in faith and repentance, when I confess my faith in Christ and am baptized for the remission of my sins.

Acts 2:36-38, 41

 - a. Then I am saved, and added to this “ekklesia,” this church (the Lord’s one and only church (Acts 2:47)!
2. The descriptions given here are nothing like what man describes!
 - A. These descriptions are nothing like an unruly mob, merely having some assembly somewhere, a wandering group, a club meeting, or anything else to which men try to compare the church!

What Work Does the Church Have on Earth?

1. **When we speak in terms of Acts 2:47 or Ephesians 4:4, this worldwide group, composed of the saved, has no work that it is to do.**
 - A. **However, we find that when saved people in a specific location agree to work and worship together, then there is work to be done in a “local” sense.**
 - B. **For example, we read of the Lord’s church located in Jerusalem, Corinth, Colossae, Galatia, Ephesus, Smyrna, Laodicea, Sardis, Thyatira, Antioch, Rome, etc.**
 - 1) **These groups are not multiple denominations teaching different and conflicting doctrines. Instead, these are Christians who lived in a particular area and formed a local group of called-out people.**

Romans 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.

2. **Within this relationship, we see Christians engaging in worship to God.**

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 20:7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: **On the first day of the week** let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

Ephesians 5:19 **speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs**, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord

A. Also as well as serving God through evangelism.

1 Thessalonians 1:8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, **but also in every place**. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

B. Edification of the saints.

Ephesians 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, **for the edifying of the body of Christ**,

C. Benevolence to the saints.

Acts 11:28-30

3. We do this today!

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these **to faithful men who will be able to teach others also**.

Conclusion

1. **As we can see, the church, as described in Scripture, is far different from what the world wishes the church to be.**
2. **Let us respect what Christ has founded (Matthew 16:18), purchased (Acts 20:28), and leads today (Colossians 1:18).**
3. **She has specific work to do and needs to be about doing it.**
4. **The church of Christ is not a club, a social group, a mob, a denomination, or anything like that.**
 - A. **Instead, she is a spiritual relationship with spiritual work to do.**

Romans 14:17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, **but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**

5. **The blessed church that belongs to Christ needs to be continuing with the spiritual work until the Lord returns!**
 - A. **And those of us who are “in Christ” are an active part of that!**

Invitation

Place

Date

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