

CHURCH WHAT IS IT?

21 January 2024

God's Definition

Romans 12:4-5

1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:1-16

What is Your Definition of Church?

- Which definition are you most comfortable with? God's or Yours?

Growing as Disciples in 2024

- Desire, Determination, Discipline, Diligence, Delight, Duty/Do
- D for DESIRE.

WHO Is the Church? See handout from 7 & 14 January Sermons.

Church Is People - NOT A BUILDING or A PLACE!

- The Church is NOT a building, place, or an organization.
- **The Church is PEOPLE.**
- The Church is PEOPLE living in covenant with each other to serve each other.
- The Church is PEOPLE formed into ONE BODY (by GOD) and each member belongs to each other. (Romans 12:4-5)
- The Church is PEOPLE coming TOGETHER to steadfastly study doctrine, fellowship, pray, and worship. (**Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:24-25**)
- Staying away from CHURCH is staying away from PEOPLE.
- Missing CHURCH is missing PEOPLE.
- Missing CHURCH is much, much more than just missing "church".
- Missing CHURCH is saying, "I don't need the "church - people" and they don't need me!"; Missing Church is saying, "I don't care what God says I am going to live my life my way." - All of f which is SIN!

Local vs Universal Church

- There is an inexcusable ignorance of the biblical definition of "the Church".
- The first time we find "church" in the New Testament it is from the Lord's lips in Matthew 16:18 where He says, ". . . I will build MY church." **MEDITATE.**
 - ★ Clearly Christ declares two important truths:
 - ① HE is the Builder of His Church. **The Church cannot build itself!**
 - ② The Church belongs to HIM. It is HIS church.
- The second time is again from Christ's lips in Matthew 18:17 in regards to church discipline.
- In these two incidents (the only ones in the Gospels) we learn, from Christ, that there is a universal and a local teaching when it comes to our

- understanding of “**the Church**”. There is also a **corporate** teaching.
- The New Testament teaches much, much more about the LOCAL church than it teaches about the UNIVERSAL church.
 - The 21st Century “church” is predominately (not all) ignorant of all three teachings.
 - ✗ Universal: In the 21st century church culture anyone who says, “I am a Christian” or anyone who goes to **a** church is part of the **universal** church of Christ. These ideas are **not** biblical.
 - ✗ Local: Many today are taught and believe that church membership is not necessary. This is **unbiblical**.
 - ✗ Corporate: The “Church” is infected with the thinking of the 21st culture’s individualism. “What I do in my private life is my business.”; “You mind your business and I’ll mind my business.”; “I am responsible to Christ not the “Church”. These thoughts are **not** true when it comes to “**the Church**.” They are **unbiblical**.
 - Like **all** doctrine, we must be **biblically correct** when it comes to the doctrine of the Church.
 - One problem in “the Church” today is that we **interpret** “the Church” by what we see or experience and that becomes our definition for “church.” BUT this is GROSSLY incorrect. We get our understanding and truth from the Word of God and **then** evaluate what we see to determine if what we see or what we experience is **really** “church”.
 - When we say, “We are going to church.” we are subconsciously and maybe consciously saying that we are going to “a building” or “a geographical location”.
 - **MEDITATE: If our church building was to burn down on Friday night would we still come/go to “church”.**
 - The Church **IS PEOPLE**. BUT not **all** people or any kind of people. (See handout again!)

Biblical Names for the Church: Single Nouns

- A Flock - Sheep that obey His commands. (John 10:11, 14-15, 26-29)
- A Bride - Ephesians 5:25-27, 30-31
- His Temple - 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:19-22
- Body - 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:4-5
- His House/Family - Hebrews 3:3, 6

From Corporate to Individual

- In the 21st Century we have lost the biblical concept/doctrine of the corporate being of the Church.

• Defining the Church:

① The universal or catholic Church

- In eternity (outside time and space), the Church of God is a supernatural entity made up of all those whom Christ died for and thus, saved.
- In time and space, the Church of God is an assembly of all **followers** (disciples) of Jesus Christ, their Lord and Saviour. (John 10:27-29)
- The universal church consists of living and dead saints.

② The local church

- In time and space, **God adds** His special people to local bodies where they can grow into maturity. (Ephesians 4:11-16)
- In time and space, **God prepares** “bodies” for His saints. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:4-5)

③ The corporate church - Here we define “corporate” as “unified or combined into one body, collective”. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

- God has always treated His special people corporately!
 - See Joshua 7!
 - See again Christ’s seven letters in Revelation!

• Distinguishing between the visible and invisible Church.

- The VISIBLE “church” is everyone who says they are Christians. They have personal testimonies and confess that Christ is their Lord. The Visible “church” is made up of the elect of **and** the non-elect of God.
- The INVISIBLE “church” is made up of only those who are truly elect/ chosen of God. God knows who they are! (2 Timothy 2:19)
 - **Are you one of God’s elect?** See 2 Peter 1:10.

God’s Instructions to Local Churches

- Galatians: Letter to the **churches** in Galatia.
- Ephesians: Letter to the **church** in Ephesus
- Philippians: Letter to the **church** in Philippi.
- Colossians: Letter to the **church** in Colossae.
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians: Letters to the **church** in Thessalonica.
 - ★ A model church from last week’s sermon.
- 1 Timothy: Letter to Timothy that included how to appoint elders and deacons in local **churches**.
- Revelation 2-3: Christ’s letters to seven local **churches**.
 - To each church Christ wrote:
 - ✓ “I know your works.” **MEDITATE**. Christ sees our works. Christ evaluates us by our works - NOT our words!
 - ✓ A commendation (except Laodicea).
 - ✓ A condemnation/criticism (except Smyrna and Philadelphia)
 - ✓ A warning.

✓ An exhortation

✓ A promise

→ Each of these letters dealt with specific problems, the social-economic-religious environment in which the church was existing and the temptations, testings, and problems that the churches faced.

★ **CHRIST SEES.** Christ “walks” among His local churches. (Revelation 1:12-13, 20)

• What if Christ wrote a letter to IBC and/or HIBC?

➤ **“I KNOW YOUR WORKS.”**

➤ Would He have a commendation for us?

➤ What would be His condemnation/criticisms of us?

➤ What warning would He give us about 2024? I discipline those I love! (Hebrews 12:5-7; Prov 3:11-12; Rev 3:19; Deut 8:5; Job 5:17)

➤ What would be His exhortation? **REPENT!**

➤ What would be His promise? There is a GREAT REWARD and GREAT PEACE in keeping My commandments - in doing what I say/command! (Psalm 19:11; Psalm 119:165)

➤ Do we have ears to hear what the Spirit is **saying** to us?

Local Church NOT “Home” Church

• One cannot say, “I am a member of my church back at home and that is why I am not a member here.”

• One cannot be a **member** of a Body hundreds of kilometers away from the “Body”!

• One cannot serve the “Body” at “home.”

• A “hand” cannot serve a Body far away from it.

• One must join a LOCAL church in order to fulfill their God given responsibilities.

• One cannot grow with a “Body” that is kilometers away.

The Local Church Is ONE BODY (intro to next week’s sermon)

• ONE HEAD of the BODY (not individuals) - Christ (**Ephesians 1:22-23**).

• MANY MEMBERS - ALL Christians are placed in a BODY with a specific function. (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Peter 4:10-11; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

→ Each “graced” or “gifted” to serve within the Body. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

★ There is no such thing as an UNGIFTED or UNGRACED Christian.

→ Christ, through His Spirit, “gifts” HIS BODY so that HIS BODY can accomplish God’s purpose for “IT”.

• ONE GOAL: To grow into ONE PERFECT MAN! (Ephesians 4:12-13)

→ Point back to the necessity of discipleship

• Knitted together (Ephesians 4:16)

IS THIS YOUR DEFINITION OF CHURCH?

