

The New Testament Church (1)

Introduction:

- A. Jesus said he would build his church (Matt. 16:16-18).
 - 1. The word “church” refers to a called-out assembly of people.
 - 2. A “church” is not a building!
 - 3. It is clear from the Lord’s statement that his church did not exist yet while he was on earth.
 - 4. He said that he would build it in the future.
 - 5. And, it would be built based upon the confession that he is, “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
- B. The church began on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.
 - 1. Before his death and resurrection, Jesus promised that he would build his church (Matt. 16:18).
 - 2. After his death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven the apostles preached the gospel for the first time on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem.
 - 3. When they preached the gospel, three thousand people obeyed the gospel on the Day of Pentecost, “were added to them” (Acts 2:41).
 - 4. Added to whom?
 - 5. Added to the church (Acts 2:47)!
 - 6. The Lord adds the saved to his church.
 - 7. When people met the Lord’s conditions for forgiveness they were saved.
 - 8. When they were saved, the Lord put them in his church.
 - 9. Christ adds people to his spiritual body of saved people (the church) when they meet his terms for forgiveness of sins.
 - 10. Chart: The Lord adds the saved to his church.
- C. It is important to have a clear understanding of what the Bible says about the church.

Body:

I. The Universal Church.

- A. When the Bible speaks of the “church” it sometimes has reference to the universal church.
 - 1. The Bible uses the word “church” in two different ways.
 - 2. The first way the Bible uses the word “church” is to refer to the universal body of saved people that includes every person who is a Christian.
 - 3. This is what Jesus referred to when he said, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).
 - 4. It doesn’t matter where a person is in the world. If he obeys the gospel, then the Lord adds him to his spiritual body—the church.
- B. In the universal sense, there is only one church that Jesus built.
 - 1. There is only “one body” (Eph. 4:4-6).
 - 2. Jesus said, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).

3. He did not say, "I will build my churches!"
 4. There is only one universal body of saved people that belongs to Christ.
- C. Christ is the head of the church (Col. 1:18).
1. No man can claim to be the head of the church!
 2. The one church includes all of the saved people in the world (Eph. 5:23).
 3. Every person who meets the Lord's conditions for forgiveness of sins is added to the universal church by the Lord.
 4. Chart: The Lord adds the saved to his church.

II. The Local Church.

- A. When the Bible speaks of the "church" it sometimes has reference to a local church.
1. Remember, the Bible uses the word "church" in two different ways.
 2. The first way the Bible uses the word "church" is to refer to the universal body of saved people that includes every person who is a Christian.
 3. The second way the Bible uses the word "church" is to refer to a group of saved people who assemble together in a certain place to carry out their responsibilities to God.
 4. These groups of saved people who assemble together in a certain location are local churches.
 5. The New Testament refers to many of these local churches.
 - a. Acts 13:1.
 - b. 1 Cor. 1:2.
 - c. Gal. 1:1-2.
- B. Every Christian must assemble with a local church.
1. Once a person obeys the gospel, he is added to the universal church and is responsible for assembling with a local church.
 2. The largest functioning collective unit of Christians in the Bible is the local church in a given area.

III. New Testament Church Structure.

- A. Many religious groups have a man-made, centralized church structure.
1. Chart: Man-made centralized church structure.
 2. What if the world headquarters of the church becomes corrupt?
 3. The entire church becomes corrupt from top to bottom!
 4. Who uses this type of man-made, centralized church structure?
 - a. Roman Catholic Church
 - b. Lutheran Church
 - c. Baptist Church
 - d. Anglican Church
 - e. Methodist Church
 - f. Presbyterian Church
 - g. Jehovah's Witnesses

- h. Virtually all denominations!
- 5. The Baptist Church even admits that this type of structure did not come from the New Testament.
- 6. Chart: Quote from *Hiscox Standard Baptist Manual*, p. 120.
- B. The New Testament presents a very simple church structure.
 - 1. Chart: New Testament church structure.
 - 2. The head cannot become corrupt, because the head is Jesus.
 - 3. What if one of the local churches becomes corrupt?
 - 4. The others can remain pure because they are not controlled by the corrupt church.
 - 5. In the Bible, there is no “Head Church” over the other churches, and there are no earthly headquarters.
 - 6. Each local church is equal and independent.
 - 7. How can equal and independent churches have unity?
 - 8. If each one follows the New Testament pattern, then there will be unity (2 Jn. 9).

IV. The Name Of The Church.

- A. What is the church called in the Bible?
 - 1. It is often simply referred to as “the church,” because there was only one kind--There were no denominations!
 - 2. In the Bible, the church is called by names which show that it belongs to Christ.
 - a. Rom. 16:16.
 - b. 1 Thess. 2:14.
- B. The names of modern denominations are not found in the Bible.
 - 1. The church is never called by the name of a man in the Bible.
 - a. For example, it is never called “St. Paul’s” church or the “Lutheran” church.
 - b. These kinds of names didn’t come from the Bible.
 - 2. The names of many modern religious groups did not come from the Bible.
 - a. Roman Catholic Church?
 - b. Baptist Church?
 - c. Pentecostal Church?
 - d. Reformed Church?
 - e. Seventh-Day Adventist Church?
 - f. Mormon Church?
 - 3. Denominational names are not part of the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

V. The Worship Of The Local Church.

- A. Local churches are to meet in order to worship God.
 - 1. The universal church never meets for worship—it would be impossible for it to meet collectively.
 - 2. Each local church is to meet for worship.

- a. Heb. 10:24-25.
 - b. Acts 20:7.
- B. What is involved in the worship of the local church?
 - 1. The Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-25).
 - a. What represents the Lord's body? Meat, potato chips, or unleavened bread?
 - b. What represents the Lord's blood? Water, milk, or fruit of the vine (Matt. 26:29)?
 - c. How often should it be done (Acts 20:7)? Once every year, once every month, or every Sunday?
 - 2. Music (Eph. 5:19-20).
 - a. What kind of music is specified? Playing instruments, playing instruments & singing, or just singing?
 - b. What are we to use in making the melody while we sing? The harp, the piano, or the heart?
 - 3. Giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:7).
 - a. When should it be done? Saturday, Thursday, or Sunday (first day of the week)?
 - b. What method should be used? Tithing, bake sales, or freewill offerings?
 - 4. Praying (Acts 2:42).
 - 5. Teaching and Preaching (Acts 11:26).
- C. There are no other acts of worship prescribed for the church in the New Testament.
 - 1. What if someone decides to change the worship of the church or add some more acts of worship?
 - 2. If we worship God according to man-made rules then our worship is empty and worthless (Matt. 15:8-9).
 - 3. Remember, Christ is the head of the church!

Conclusion:

- A. The Bible gives us a clear picture of the church that Jesus built.
- B. When we see what the church was like in the New Testament, then we know exactly what the church should be like today.
- C. But unfortunately, many religious people forget that Christ is the head of the church.
- D. Let's make sure we don't forget.