

The New Testament Church (2)

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. The “universal” church.
 - a. The Bible uses the word “church” in two different ways.
 - b. 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.
 - c. This is what Jesus referred to when he said, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).
 - d. In the universal sense, there is only one church that Jesus built.
 - e. Jesus said, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).
 - f. He did not say, “I will build my churches!”
 - g. There is only one universal body of saved people that belongs to Christ.
 - h. Jesus is the head of the church.
 - i. No man can claim to be the head of the church!
 - j. The one church includes all of the saved people in the world (Eph. 5:23).
 - k. Every person who meets the Lord’s conditions for forgiveness of sins is added to the universal church by the Lord.
 - l. Chart: The Lord adds the saved to his church.
- D. The “local” church.

1. 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.
 2. Many of these local churches are mentioned in the Bible (Acts 13:1).
 3. Once a person obeys the gospel, he is added to the universal church and is responsible for assembling with a local church.
 4. The largest functioning unit of Christians in the Bible is the local church in a given location.
- E. Church structure.
1. The New Testament presents a very simple church structure.
 2. Chart: New Testament church structure.
 3. The head cannot become corrupt, because the head is Jesus.
 4. What if one of the local churches becomes corrupt?
 5. The others can remain pure because they are not controlled by the corrupt church.
 6. In the Bible, there is no “Head Church” over the other churches, and there are no earthly headquarters.
 7. Each local church is equal and independent.
 8. How can equal and independent churches have unity (2 Jn. 9)?
- F. The name of the church.
1. What is the church called in the Bible?
 2. It is often simply referred to as “the church,” because there was only one kind.
 3. In the Bible, the church is called by names which show that it belongs to Christ (Rom. 16:16).
 4. The church is never called by the name of a man in the Bible.
 5. The names of modern denominations are not found in the Bible.
 - a. Roman Catholic Church?
 - b. Baptist Church?
 - c. Pentecostal Church?
 - d. Reformed Church?
 - e. Seventh-Day Adventist Church?
 - f. Mormon Church?
 6. Denominational names are not part of the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).
- G. The worship of the local church.
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 (Heb. 10:24-25).
 3. There are five acts of worship approved for the church in the New Testament.
 - a. The Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-25).
 - b. Singing (Ephesians 5:19).
 - c. Giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
 - d. Prayer (Acts 2:42).
 - e. Teaching/Preaching (Acts 11:25-26).
 4. These are the only acts of worship of the church found in the Bible!

Body:

I. The Organization Of The Local Church.

A. How is the local church to be organized?

1. First of all, we know that Christ is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18).
2. The church belongs to Christ because he has purchased it for himself (Acts 20:28).
3. Each member of the local church is equal to the others.
4. What about “priests” in the church?
5. In the New Testament, every Christian is a priest!
 - a. 1 Pet. 2:9.
 - b. Rev. 1:6.
 - c. There is no separate priesthood in the church.

B. Each local church is a group of saints.

1. “Saints” are people who are set apart to God.
 - a. Phil. 1:1.
 - b. 1 Cor. 1:2.
2. Within this group of saints there should ideally be those who are “elders” and “deacons.”

II. Elders, Deacons, Preachers, And Teachers In The Local Church.

A. Elders are referred to by six different terms in the New Testament.

1. Elders (Titus 1:5).
2. Bishops (Philippians 1:1).
3. Overseers (Acts 20:28).
4. Shepherds (1 Peter 5:2).
5. Presbyters (Acts 14:23).
6. Pastors (Ephesians 4:11).
7. It is important to understand that all six of these terms are referring to the same thing!

B. Elders are overseers in the local church.

1. Their responsibility is to oversee the work of the local church in order to make sure that the church follows the Bible in all areas.
2. 1 Pet. 5:1-3.

C. Elders must meet certain qualifications in order to serve.

1. Members of the church must meet certain qualifications in order to serve as elders in the local church.
2. 1 Tim. 3:1-7.

D. There should be qualified men serving as elders in each local church.

1. There must be at least 2 elders in a church, or no elders at all (Acts 14:23).
2. Chart: The denominational idea of church organization is to have one elder (bishop) oversee the work of several different churches.
3. This denominational idea is not found in the Bible!
4. Chart: God’s plan is for each local church to have its own elders overseeing their own work.

5. The elders of one church cannot oversee the work of another church (1 Pet. 5:2)!
- E. Deacons are servants in the local church.
 1. Deacons are servants who carry out tasks assigned by the elders in the local church.
 2. Like those who serve as elders, members of the church must meet certain qualifications to serve as deacons.
 3. 1 Tim. 3:8-12.
- F. Each local church should have teachers and preachers.
 1. Eph. 4:11-12.
 2. But the preacher is not the head of the church—Jesus is!

III. The Work Of The Local Church.

- A. What kind of work should the local church be involved in?
 1. What kind of work should the local church collectively do?
 2. What should the local church use its funds and resources for?
 3. Every local church has been given the same responsibilities by God (1 Cor. 4:16-17).
 4. There are basically three types of work that the local church is authorized to engage in.
- B. Three areas of responsibility for each local church.
 1. Each church is responsible for preaching the gospel (1 Thess. 1:8).
 2. Each church is responsible for edifying its members (Eph. 4:16).
 3. Each church is responsible for providing for the physical needs of destitute members of the church (Rom. 15:26).
 4. According to the Bible, these are the only three areas of work that the church is authorized to involve itself in!
- C. What is not part of the work of the local church?
 1. There are many things that are not the responsibility of the local church:
 - a. Social and recreational activities.
 - b. Political activities.
 - c. Social welfare work (i.e. soup kitchens, hospitals, etc.).
 - d. Secular education (i.e. schools and colleges).
 - e. Business activities.
 2. The church has absolutely no authority from God to engage in any of these things!

Conclusion:

- A. The Bible gives us a clear picture of what the church was like in the first century A.D.
- 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. Don't forget that Christ is the head of the church.
- D. If we refuse to submit to him as the head of the church, then we cannot claim to be part of the church that he built.