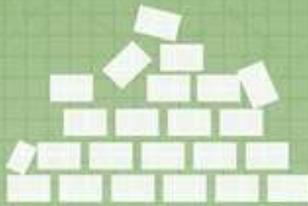


Sermon  SNAPSHOTS



FOUNDATIONS

CHRIST'S CHURCH &
COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

fishers
Church of Christ

THE CHURCH WHICH BELONGS TO CHRIST

In Mt.16:13-20, we learn that Christ promised to "build" a "church" – *HIS church!* He said the gates of Hades would not prevail against it. He "purchased" it with His own blood (Ac.20:28); and it is the **ONLY** church over which He is head (Ep.1:22-23; cf. 4:4). *I believe this church must be in existence somewhere!* In this lesson, we "search the Scriptures," so that we may identify "The Church Which Belongs to Christ."

What *IS* the church (Greek: ekklesia)?

- Church of Christ = the "called out" group of people (church) who belong to (of) Jesus (Christ)!
- It is a phrase which describes those people who've been "*called*" by the gospel (2Th.2:13-14)
- This church is *figuratively* made up of "*living stones*" those "*called out*" of darkness (1Pt.2:4-10)
- And it is *these people alone* who constitute, or make up, Christ's "church" (cf. Ac.2:38, 41, 47)

What is the purpose of the church?

- First, consider that the church has been *blood-bought!* (Ac.20:28) – *We belong to Christ!*
- We are purchased to be *God's servants*, so that we may "*glorify*" Him (1Cor.6:19-20)
- One way we "glorify God" is through our day by day service *as individuals* (1Cor.10:31)
- We also "glorify God" by service *as a "local" [i.e., organized] church* (Ph.1:1, 9-11)

How and why is this church organized?

- The "universal" church has **NO** organization; only the individual and Christ (cf. 1Pt.2:25)
- The only organizational structure is a "local" church (Ac.9:26-28; cf. 14:23; 1Pt.5:1-3)
- "Local" churches are organized for *specific* and *limited* purposes! (1Tm.5:16) -*Fire vs. Hwy. Dept.*
- Those specific purposes are **limited benevolence, teaching, & worship** (1Tm.5:16-18; Ac.20:7)

What produces the pure church of Christ?

- NOT the creeds of men, *but the Divine will of Jesus Christ!* (Col.2:6-10)
- NOT "church" succession, *for the "church" can err!* (cf. Ac.20:28-30)
- Rather, it can **ONLY** be produced by "*the seed*" (word of God, 1Pt.1:23-25)
- And we must be content with this "seed" **ONLY!** (cf. 2Tm.3:16-17)

So, are YOU a member of the "church" which belongs to Christ? If not, then you have not been called by the gospel, for the "church" IS this called group of people! In other words, if you are not a member, you have not been saved, because the church IS the saved (Ac.2:47)! There's no time like now to become a member of "The Church Which Belongs to Christ." Why don't you obey the Lord, and be saved right now?



MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE CHURCH

As much as is taught about the NT church, it is ironic that several misconceptions continue. Many, *both in and out of the church*, do not fully grasp the true concept of the church. As a result, bad communication abounds – *for we can't communicate what we do not understand ourselves!* This lesson will consider some common misconceptions.

The church (universal or local) saves from sin

- Catholicism teaches that “**Union with the Church**” is the “**only means**” of salvation!
- But we do not get in the church to be saved; *rather, we must be saved to get in the church!*
- The church does not save; *it IS the saved* (Ac.2:47)! **CHRIST** is savior! (Ep.5:23; 1Tm.2:5)
- This does NOT “minimize the importance of the church,” but puts it in proper perspective!

Acceptance by a local church = God's acceptance

- *Universal* fellowship is controlled by **GOD**; *local* is controlled by **MEN**! (Ac.2:47; 9:26)
- Men may accept the unfaithful due to errors in judgment, being deceived, or weakness
- As proof, consider: 1Cor.5:1; 3Jn.9-10; Rv.2:14-16 (It is *not* right – but it *does* happen!)
- Further, there MAY be true saints among *unfaithful churches*! (Rv.3:1-4; 2Cor.6:14-18)

The church (universal or local) is a lawmaking body

- Catholicism says, “*We must obey church decrees;*” & Protestants substitute their *creeds*
- Among “us,” the same notion often comes out like this: “*What do ‘we’ believe about...*”
- This makes “the church” the source of authority, *rather than Christ!* (Mt.28:18; Jm.4:12)
- The church is NOT a legislative body, but a submissive body; *it obeys Christ* (Ep.5:23-24)

The church (universal or local) validates worship or work

- This reveals itself in things like: “*We must be baptized by a ‘church of Christ’ preacher.*”
- Or, “*We can only worship within a local church*” (but note Ac.16:25; 20:36; Hb.13:15)
- Or, “*We can only worship in ‘the’ assembly*” (thus: no class; no PM communion; 1 cup)
- There’s a HUGE difference between: “*The church may do it,*” & “*ONLY the church may do it*”

The church (universal or local) is infallible (without error)

- Catholics teach “the Infallibility of the Church” – *i.e., that the “church” cannot be wrong!*
- This notion is no less sinful among us! The “church” can err! (cf. Ac.20:28-30; Rv.3:1-3)
- Why is it possible for the church to go astray? *Because it is made up of fallible humans!*
- Paul warns us against “measuring” and “comparing” ourselves by ourselves (cf. 2Cor.10:12)

The “universal” church is made up of local congregations

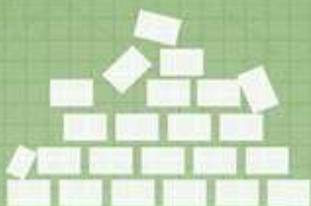
- This is a denominational concept! A *body*, made up of *bodies*, made up of *individuals!*
- *But in the Scriptures, the universal church is made up of individual saints!* (1Cor.12:13)
- Why is this important? Because an “organization of churches” is sinful! (Ac.14:23; 20:28)
- *That is a denomination by definition!* (Institutional, Denominational, Ecumenical bodies)

These are just a few “denominational concepts” which are found among some of us. Let us work to rid ourselves of them, preaching against erroneous concepts that may hinder our perception of the true church for which Christ died. If we have improper concepts of the church, it can lead to sectarianism, turning us into a denomination.

-Lanny Smith

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Find Us

10082 East 126th Street
Fishers, IN 46038
(317) 577-3788

Our Eldership

Jan Boser (H) 773-3178 (C) 509-1828
Al Easter (H) 585-9846 (C) 698-1846
Randy Shouse 570-4908
Lanny Smith 770-8077

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