

## *The Work Of The Church (IV)*

### *What Is The Church?*

INTRO.: Apostasies of the 1800s and 1900s duplicated the errors that led to the formation of the Roman Catholic Church. Anywhere proper attitudes prevail, an understanding of the nature of the Lord's church will prevent many divisions. Unfortunately, most people are swayed more by modern than by biblical attitudes. 1 Pt.4:11. Most people are confused over "church," viewing it as a building...a denomination...or religious people.

#### **I. Definition Of Church**

- A. The English word "church" ultimately comes from a Late Greek word that means "of the Lord." The original word means a calling, an assembly. The word *always* refers to people of some kind. E.g. –
1. They can fear, Ac.5:11.
  2. They can be persecuted, Ac.8:1.
  3. They are called disciples, Ac.9:1, and saints, 9:13; 1 Co.1:2.
  4. They can pray, Ac.12:5.
  5. They are purchased by the blood of Christ, Ac.20:28.
- B. The Lord's church is God's called people: called by the gospel, 2 Th.2:14; 1 Th.1:4,5. Cf. 1 Pt.2:4-9 –

<i>Darkness</i>	<i>Light</i>
Reject Lord, 4	Come to Lord, 4
Put to shame, 6	Believe on Him, not put to shame, 6
Stumble, 8	Honor, 7
Darkness, 9	Light, 9
Not a people, 10	People of God, 10
No mercy, 10	Mercy, 10

- C. Ancient uses of the word –
1. Classical: "An assembly of the citizens summoned by the crier, the legislative assembly; at Athens, the ordinary assemblies were called *kuriai ek . . .*" (Liddell-Scott). Cf. Ac.19:32, 39, 41.
  2. Septuagint: Congregation of Israel. 1 K.8:14. [Ac.7:38 does not refer to church of Jesus any more than Ac.19 does.]
  3. NT: only three times in Matthew–John (Mt.16:18; 18:17); occurs often in Acts and epistles. Term breaks with Greek usage by limiting it to *Christians*, and with Jewish usage by rejecting the term *synagogue*.

#### **II. NT Uses Of Church**

- A. **General** (universal) use includes all who belong to Christ. It describes a relationship, not a place. Mt.16:18. Cf. Latin Vulgate in Ac.5:11, *universam ecclesiam*.
- B. **Local** (geographical) use includes only those who compose a congregation in a certain place. Christians united themselves in local groups. E.g., Ac.13:1; 1 Co.14:23. [Also of congregations in a particular region. E.g., Ro.16:16, Corinth, Cenchrea...? 2 Co.8:1, Macedonia. Ga.1:2, Galatia; 1:22, Judea. Cf. "the church in Tennessee."]
- C. **Distributive** use refers to those who constitute a local church in a place *whether assembled or not*. Ac.8:1,3, "church" though in their own houses.

### III. *Difference In Church Universal And Local*

<i>Universal</i>	<i>Church</i>	<i>Local</i>
Ac.2:47 (5:11)	<b><i>Beginning</i></b>	Ac.8:1; 9:31
Ac.2:47, were added; Hb.12:22-23, enrolled	<b><i>Entrance</i></b>	Ac.9:26, joined
Ep.5:23, saved	<b><i>Composition</i></b>	Rv.2:14-16; 3:1-4, some lost
1 Jn.1:1-4, God	<b><i>Fellowship</i></b>	Ph.4:15, brethren
Ep.4:4; 1 Co.12:13, one	<b><i>Number</i></b>	Rv.2,3, seven...
Ep.1:22-23, united	<b><i>Unity</i></b>	1 Co.1:10; 3 Jn.9-10
Ep.1:22, none	<b><i>Earthly organization</i></b>	Ph.1:1
Hb.13:20	<b><i>Shepherds</i></b>	Ac.14:23; 20:28
No collective work	<b><i>Work</i></b>	Ph.4:15, collective work
No assemblies	<b><i>Assembling</i></b>	1 Co.14:23; Hb.10:25
No treasury	<b><i>Treasury</i></b>	1 Co.16:1-4
Ph.1:21-25; Rv.3:21	<b><i>Effect of Death</i></b>	Ac.8:1-3

### IV. *Makeup Of Church Universal*

A. ***Denominations?*** A denomination is a plurality of churches acting collectively. E.g.: Southern Baptist Convention.

1. Denominationalism is division, therefore sinful, Jn.17:20-22.
2. Denominationalism proceeds from human wisdom, not divine, Jn.17:17.
  - a. A building for worship is called "the church."
  - b. The "clergy" (officials) are called "the church."
  - c. A denomination is called "the church." 1 Pt.4:11

B. ***Churches?*** This view would make each local church a member of the church universal (body), and thus each Christian a member of a member of the body – a *church-hood*. Ac.2:41,47, the Lord added individuals as they obeyed, not churches. 1 Co.12 illustrates.

C. ***Christians?*** Yes.

1. One *may* be in fellowship with a local church but out of fellowship with God, 1 Co.5:1-2; Rv.3:1-4.
2. One *may* be out of fellowship with a local church but in fellowship with God, Ac.8:39; 9:26; 3 Jn.9-10.