

# A DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

## INTRODUCTION

In our first lesson of this series, we discussed the **origin** of the church of Christ, about which we read in the New Testament. (1) We learned that it's origin goes back to GOD, in His eternal plan—to offer salvation to mankind. (2). We also learned that the church began on earth, as is recorded in Acts chapter 2.

This lesson will be a study of what the church of Christ really **is**.

## DISCUSSION

### I. 1<sup>st</sup>, we note the meaning of the English word “church.”

A. The word “church” is used in 3 different ways in the New Testament.

1. 1<sup>st</sup>, it refers to the **whole** or **universal** church. Mat. 16:18; Acts 20:28; Eph. 3:14
  - a. Christ is the head of the church, and resides in heaven on His throne at God's right hand. Col. 1:18; Heb. 8:1
    - 1) He is **not** the head of idolatry, or divided denominations on the earth. 1 Cor. 1:10-13 (Discuss fully)
    - 2) Christ is the head of all who “call upon” Him in obedience. 1 Cor. 1:2; cf Acts 22:16
  - b. All who are saved constitute the church. Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23
2. 2<sup>nd</sup>, the word “church” is used to describe **local** congregations, who are a part of the **whole** church. Rom. 16:16; cf 1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 12:23
3. 3<sup>rd</sup>, the word “church” refers to a **worship assembly** in a local congregation. 1 Cor. 14:23; cf Acts 20:7; Jas. 2:2

B. The word “church” is never used in the New Testament to refer to **a** denomination, or to **different** denominations, or to **all** denominations with earthly headquarters, for there were none in existence in the first century.

*“It is most likely that in the Apostolic age, when there was but 'one Lord, one faith, and one baptism,' and **no differing denominations existed**, the baptism of a convert by that very act constituted him a member of the church, and at once endowed him with all the rights and privileges of full membership. In that sense, 'baptism was the door into the church.' **Now it is different;** and while the churches are desirous of receiving members, they are wary and cautious that they do not receive unworthy persons. The churches therefore have candidates come before them, make their statement, give their 'experience.' and then their reception is decided by a vote of the members. And while they cannot become members without baptism, yet it is the vote of the body which admits them to its fellowship on receiving baptism.” [The Standard Manual For Baptist Churches, by Edward Hiscox, page 22]*

1. A denomination is a group of like congregations that are **smaller** than the whole or universal church (as revealed in the New Testament.)
  - a. Most denominations think of themselves as being right or correct in doctrine and religious practices.

- b. Yet, most will not exclude other denominations who have other teachings and practices.
- 2. A denomination is **larger** than a local congregation or worship assembly.
- 3. The church of the New Testament is **pre-denominational** in that it existed before denominations began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and is **anti-denominational**, in that it is opposed to the concept and existence of “denominations”, and is also **non-denominational** in it's fellowship, in that it is not a division of the whole church, but is the whole church.

## II. 2<sup>nd</sup>, let's consider the definition of the Greek word FOR “church”

- A. In the Greek language of the New Testament, the word for “church” is the word “ekklesia” (which means “the called out”).
- B. There are various ways that the church is the “called out” people of God.
  - 1. The church consists of those who are called out **by the gospel**. Cf 2 Thes. 2:14
  - 2. The church consists of those who are called out of **darkness into light**. Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9
  - 3. The church consists of those who are called out of **condemnation**, into a state of salvation. Acts 2:38-40, 47
  - 4. The church consists of those who are called out to **justification**. Rom. 8:30
  - 5. The church consists of those who are called **children of God**. Rom. 9:26; cf Gal. 3:26-27
  - 6. The church consists of those who are called into the **kingdom of God**. 1 Thes. 2:12
  - 7. The church consists of those who are called unto **holiness**. 1 Thes. 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:15
  - 8. The church consists of those who are called to be **saints** (separated from sin). 1 Cor. 1:2; cf 6:9-10
  - 9. The church consists of those who are called unto **glory**. 2 Pet. 1:3.4.2:16

### CONCLUSION

- I. There are many blessings for those who are in the New Testament church.
  - A. First, we are in a fellowship with the Lord where salvation is enjoyed.
  - B. Second, we have the hope of eternal life which the Lord offers the church.
- II. Are you a faithful member of this great institution of the Lord?

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