

WHY IS THE CHURCH IMPORTANT?

Many true Christians still have a lack of understanding and belief in the importance of the church. The reasons for this may vary from person to person. Some see the church only in the sense of the one local congregation of which they are a member. Some even see the church as the building they meet in. Some see the church as just another denomination among all the denominations. All of these fall far short of seeing the church for what she really is.

The church is those called out of the world. The very word "church" indicates those who have been called out as those called to an assembly of some sort. In the case of the church, it is those who are called by the gospel (II Thess. 2:14) from the power of the darkness of this world, and translated into the kingdom of the Lord (Col. 1:13). More will be said about that kingdom in the following paragraphs.

The church is the aggregate of all who are saved. The church is made up of all that have met the requirements of the word of God to be one of God's children, the saved. Luke said, "...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). All that are to be saved are added by the Lord to the church, thus it is made up of all the saved.

The church is the kingdom of the Lord. Recall from above that one is delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Lord (Col. 1:13). Christ is "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (I Tim. 6:15). His kingdom is a spiritual one rather than a physical one (John 18:36; Luke 17:21). "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33).

The church is the body of Christ. Paul wrote, "And he is the head of the body, the church..." (Col. 1:18). There is only one body (Eph. 4:4). Yet that body is made up of many members (I Cor. 12:14). In fact, Paul said, "But now are they many members, yet but one body" (I Cor. 12:20). Notice also that Christ is the head of that body (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). And, as already noted, God hath "set the members every one of them in the body..." (I Cor. 12:18).

My friends, if the church were nothing more than a man made institution such as the various denominations, then it would not be important. However, it was built by Christ and purchased with His blood (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). It is therefore important! *Robert*

WHAT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO MY LOCAL CONGREGATION?

When one obeys the first principles of the gospel of Christ, the Lord adds that person to the church. The Bible clearly presents the church in two senses, the church universal (Matt. 16:18) and the individual congregations (I Cor. 1:2). As members of a local congregation, we have certain responsibilities to that individual congregation. Let us consider some of our responsibilities and question ourselves as to whether we are meeting them or not.

First, we have to support our local congregation with our presence. The Bible commands us, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is..." (Heb. 10:25). However, without such a command, it would be apparent to any logically thinking person that we would have responsibility to support the church with our presence. Our presence promotes growth in our own spiritual lives (II Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12ff). Our presence exhorts and encourages our fellow Christian worshippers (Heb. 10:24-25). Our presence encourages any non-Christian visitors that are present. And our presence can influence neighbors and others that see our faithfulness.

We have to support our local congregation financially. Again, we have Bible command to do so (I Cor. 16:1-2; II Cor. 9:6-7). But again, common sense would tell us that we are responsible to help finance the work of the church of which we are a member. Satan is not going to provide the means, the atheist is not going to provide the means, the infidel is not going to provide the means. The financial support of the work of the church must come from within the church. Granted, that many small congregations have help from brethren from other congregations, but we certainly have a responsibility to do all we can.

We need to support the local congregation by of "light shining". "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Every one of us is an example for others to see. We need to make sure that we set the example of a believer (I Tim. 4:12) rather than the example of a hypocrite.

We must be supporters of the local congregation by teaching the gospel (Mark 16:15). This is the true work of the church. The responsibility does not solely belong to the preacher or elders, but to every member. Are you meeting your responsibilities?

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