

Lesson 26 – What You Need to Know About the Church

The Church is not a Museum to display the virtues of the saints; it is a hospital for sinners.

Having church can be a substitute for being the church.

—Charles Patterson, Hope Chapel, Austin, TX

1. Definition of *Church*

a. Greek - ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*) –

- i. Secular meaning of the Greek word: an assembly of people who were called out (from)... In ancient Greece, whenever there was significant news to be told, a herald would go through the streets calling people to come out of their homes to a meeting place. He would convene an assembly of people to tell them the news he was sent to give. There are 3 elements here that help us understand the literal meaning of the Greek word *ekklēsia*
 1. They were *called*. The herald went through the streets calling them.
 2. They were called *out*. The herald called them *out* of their homes.
 3. They were called *together*. The herald called them to an assembly to tell them all the news at once.
- ii. Christian meaning of the Greek word uses the literal meaning of the word as it applied in the secular world and applies it to God's New Testament people:
 1. We are *called* of God.
 2. We are called *out* from the world. We are to be different.
 3. We are called *together* to be part of the assembly of God's people – the local church. – 1 Cor. 1:2
 4. We are called to become part of the general assembly and church of the firstborn the Universal Local Church which God is building now, and which will meet together in Heaven. – Heb. 12:23
- iii. Local Church and Universal Church
God's calling of people out and together as an assembly is twofold:
 1. On Earth – the Local Church
 - a. The literal meaning of *church* is the local assembly of believers.
 - b. Almost every time the word *ekklēsia* is used in the New Testament, it refers to the local church.
 2. In Heaven – the Universal Church
 - a. The ultimate meaning of the Universal church has to do with the great assembly of all of God's people – from all nations and all ages – are gathered in and assembled before Him in Heaven. – Heb. 12:23
 - b. The word also refers to the universal church here in this world – all genuinely born again people, regardless of their denominational affiliation. – 1 Co4. 15:9
 - c. Those who are in the universal church have their names written in the Book of Life in Heaven – Rev. 21:27

b. English – *church*

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- i. Many scholars believe the origins of the English word come from the Greek word κυριακόν (δωμα) *kyriakon (dōma)* which means Lord's (house). The church is the Lord's. The old Scottish word for church – *kirk* – conveyed this meaning.
2. Who is in the Church?
 - a. In the Universal church – everyone who is genuinely born again.
 - b. In a Biblical local church
 - i. Born again people
 - ii. Scripturally Baptized people
In the New Testament, there was no such thing as an unbaptized believer, because people were always baptized right after they were saved. This is the Scriptural pattern.
3. What the Church is not
 - a. It is not a denomination
 - i. Most denominations call themselves “the church”
 1. The Roman Catholic Church
 2. The United Methodist Church
 3. The Presbyterian Church in America
 4. The Episcopal Church
 5. The Church of the Nazarene
 - ii. Baptists understand this
 1. Although there are many groups of Baptists, none that I know of calls itself the “*The _____ Baptist Church*”
 - a. Southern Baptist Convention
 - b. Conservative Baptist Association
 - c. Baptist General Conference
 - d. General Association of Regular Baptists
 - e. Baptist Bible Fellowship
 2. Why Southern Baptists are called the Southern Baptist *Convention*
 - a. Each local church is independent and self-governing
 - b. The churches voluntarily work together to support one another and to reach the world for Christ through various mission projects with the Cooperative Program.
 - c. The authority in the denomination comes from the local churches (bottom-up rather than top-down)
 - d. That authority is exercised and expressed once a year when the churches send messengers (representatives) to the annual Convention
 - e. Our name comes from that annual meeting... the Southern Baptist Convention.
 - b. The Church is not all of “Christendom”
 - i. *Christendom* is generally understood to mean all the people and institutions in the world that claim to be Christians, regardless of their denominational affiliation, their beliefs or their lifestyle.
 - ii. Although the world thinks of this mixed multitude as “the Church,” this mass of people includes millions of people who believe the opposite of what Jesus taught, and most of them have no idea of what it is to be born again.

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4. Beginning of the church
 - a. Founded by Jesus
 - i. Built on the Rock - Jesus
 1. The Rock was not Peter
(The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Peter was the rock upon which the church was built, supposedly proving he was the first pope, and proving the church Jesus founded was the Catholic Church).
 - a. Peter = Πέτρος *Pétros* “small stone”
 - b. Jesus
 - i. Called a Rock – Πέτρα *Pétra* “massive Rock” – 1 Cor. 10:4
 - ii. Upon this Rock I will build my church – Matt. 16:18
 - ii. On the Foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets – Eph. 2:19-20
 1. Revelation – the church is founded on the Word of God
 - a. God used His prophets to write the Old Testament
 - b. God used the apostles to write most of the New Testament
 2. Leadership
 - a. The Prophets formed the Old Testament foundation for the church
 - b. The 12 Apostles formed the New Testament Foundation
 - c. All were built upon Jesus – Matt. 16:18
 - b. When was the church founded
 - i. Embryo form during the ministry of Jesus – Matt 18:15-17
 - ii. Full fruition began on the Day of Pentecost – Acts 2:4
 5. Importance of the church to God
 - a. Jesus loved the church and died for it – Eph. 5:25
 - b. Jesus will present His church to His Father without spot or wrinkle – Eph. 5:27
 - c. The church is the Body of Christ – 1 Cor. 12:27
 - d. We, as believers, are members of His body – Eph. 5:30
 6. Mission of the Church
 - a. What we are supposed to do – Matt 28:19
 - i. Win people to Christ
 - ii. Baptize them
 - iii. Train them to follow Christ
 - b. Where we are supposed to do it – Acts 1:8
 - i. Jerusalem –
 1. Our own city and the people around our church
 2. Local soul winning program to reach our neighbors for Christ
 - ii. Judea – The next county or state over
 - iii. Samaria – The people we normally don’t like to associate with
 1. People of other races or ethnic groups
 2. People of low socio-economic status
 3. People we prefer not to associate with.
 - iv. The ends of the earth – everywhere in the world
 7. Officers of the church – note that there are only 2 offices in the New Testament church
 - a. Pastors – 3 terms used for pastor

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- i. Bishop – 1 Tim. 3:1-2
 1. Greek ἐπισκοπή *episkopé*
 - a. *Epi* - over (we use that prefix in English words today – epidermis, etc.)
 - b. *Skope* – to see (we use the word in English... scope, telescope, microscope, etc.)
 2. The Greek word *episkopé* means overseer. One of the functions of pastors is to be overseers of the local church.
 3. The Episcopal Church takes their name from this Greek word, that is translated *bishop* in the English Bible.
 - ii. Elder – 1 Tim. 5:17
 1. Greek πρεσβύτερος *presbúteros*
 2. This Greek word means “old man, elder”
 3. This term signifies the function of the pastors as being spiritually mature to be able to lead the church in the way of Godliness and purity.
 - iii. Pastor – 1 Peter 5:1-2
 1. Lead God’s people (the sheep)
 2. Feed God’s people
 3. Protect God’s people from false teachings and false teachers (the wolves in sheep’s clothing) – Matt. 7:15
- b. Deacons – Acts 6:1-4
- i. General task – to provide necessary day-to-day services to God’s people in order to free up the time of the pastors for the ministry of the Word and prayer.
 - ii. Specific task – to run the church program of providing for the poor members (widows)
8. Other church workers – Eph. 4:11
- a. Apostles

The word *Apostle* Greek ἀπόστολος *apóstolos* – sent out person – had two meanings in the New Testament Church

 - i. The 12 (Foundation Apostles)
 1. These were the men Jesus chose to establish His church in the world – John 15:16
 2. He sent them out to reach the world for Him
 - a. He sent them during His personal ministry – Matt. 10:16
 - b. He sent them (and us) to reach the world in the Great Commission – Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15
 3. They had special powers and authority that no other Christian ever has had or will have
 4. Qualifications – Acts 1:21-22
 - a. They followed Jesus from the baptism of John the Baptist
 - b. They were all eyewitnesses of the Resurrection
 5. They have no successors. They were unique.
 - ii. Missionaries
 1. There was a lot of missionary activity in the New Testament church. However we do not find the word *missionary* anywhere in the Bible – or do we?

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- a. The word *apostle* was sometimes used to describe missionaries.
- b. The Latin word for Missionary – *misio* – is the Latin translation of the Greek word *apostolos* (apostle). These other “apostles” fulfilled the function of missionaries.
2. Barnabas is called an apostle (but he was not one of the 12) – Acts 14:14
3. Andronicus and Junia are called apostles – Rom. 16:7
4. Romans 16:7 infers that there were other missionaries referred to as *apostles*.
- b. Prophets – Eph. 4:11
 - i. The 12 Apostles and a few other choice servants of the Lord received messages directly from the Lord for His people and spoke them forth.
 - ii. The term also means preachers who received messages from the Lord through studying His word and sharing their insights with other church members.
- c. Evangelists – Eph. 4:11
 - i. Men with a special gifting and calling as soul winners
 - ii. Their primary ministry was winning souls to Christ
- d. Ministers – Eph. 4:11-12
 - i. The word *minister* means servant.
 - ii. Everybody in the church had the position of *minister*, because they were all expected to serve God in an active ministry (field of service).
9. Officers that are not in the church
 - a. Popes
 - b. Priests
 - c. Nuns
 - d. Monks
10. Early church meetings – what were they like? – Acts 2:41
 - a. Doctrine – teaching – Acts 2:41
 - b. Fellowship – Acts 2:41
 - i. Participation in the work of the Gospel – Phil. 1:5
 - c. Breaking of bread – Acts 2:41
 - d. Prayer – Acts 2:41
 - e. Evangelism – in the meetings – 1 Cor. 14:23-24
 - f. Singing – Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16
 - i. The purpose of the music was to edify the believers in the body
 - ii. There is nothing in the Scriptures about using the music to provide entertaining worship as is the fad of today’s churches.
11. Early church worship – Acts 2:47-48
 - a. Not much was said about worship
 - b. As you look at Acts 2, the part about praising God in verse 47 was incidental to the results of their evangelism in verse 48.
 - c. Our primary job in the church age is primarily to gather worshipers (win souls) so that we can all worship Him in His presence in Heaven – Rev. 19:1-6
12. Why should I take an active part of the church?
 - a. It is Christ’s body

Groups that think they are the original true church:

Roman Catholics
Eastern Orthodox
Armenian Apostolic
Some Episcopalians
Some Baptists
Church of Christ*
Mormon*

*These groups think they are God’s true restoration of the original church.

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- b. God commanded us – Heb 10:25
- c. It is where we encourage one another to serve God faithfully and to grow in grace – Heb. 10:25
- d. It is the only institution Jesus founded.