

What Is Christ's Church ?

Text : **I Cor. 12: 12-27**

INTRODUCTION :

A. When asking, “What is the church?” it's clear the world doesn't understand.

1. Even many in the church don't appear to understand.
2. One gets a host of widely varying answers.
3. Some reply, “Which church?” as if there is more than one.

B. Obviously, one's understanding of what Christ's church is has a direct bearing on his attitude toward the church.

1. The reason many do not highly value it is because they don't understand the church.
2. Those who do not understand Christ's church do not feel loyalty to it.

C. Our previous three lessons have shown us the importance of our Lord's church.

1. We know Christ's church is important to God because :
 - a. He planned it before He created the world.
 - b. He purchased it with the blood of His Only Begotten Son.
 - c. He uses it to accomplish His will on the earth, as His representative.
2. We observed that Christ's church is important to the individual Christian because :
 - a. It's the incubator in which each of us is matured into the likeness of Christ.
 - b. It's the safety net that catches us when we fall.
 - c. Christ's church is the platform from which Christians glorify God.
 - d. The church is the vestibule through which we enter our eternal dwelling in Heaven.
3. Christ's church is even important to the world at large because :
 - a. The church carries the message of salvation to the world.
 - b. The righteousness of the church preserves the world from the impending judgment.
 - c. Christ's church leads the fight against moral decay and corruption.

D. Since the church is so very important,

1. Its members should feel blessed to be a part of it.
2. Its members should tell the world of its value.
3. The members of the church should understand exactly what it is.

*** That's the goal of this lesson, to help us understand what the church is so we will be able to understand why it is so important. Understanding will create loyalty.**

I. First, let's consider what Christ's Church is not.

A. It is not a building.

1. Many in the world think of the church as a physical structure.
 - a. They view the building as a sacred place. (**Expect reverent behavior inside.**)
 - b. Some think they must go to a "church" to pray. (**As if God lives there**)
 - c. Carnal people may even choose to attend a church because of its building.

* **Even some Christians make this error viewing the building as holy.**
(**They make special rules for its use, its design, its décor, etc.**) (ill – funerals)
2. Christ's church in the N.T. did not have church buildings.
 - a. **Acts 5:12-** ... they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. (**in Jew's temple**)
 - b. **Acts 20:8-9** There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. ⁹ ... a young man named Eutychus ... fell down from the third floor ... (**in a rented room**)
 - c. **Rom. 16: 3, 5** Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ...
⁵ also greet the church that is in their house. (**in a member's home**)

* **There is no record in the N.T. of any congregation having a church building.**
3. Historically, the church has met in some strange places.
 - a. Even in recent history congregations start up in strange, often unseemly places.
 - b. The early church met in underground mausoleums. (**imagine the bad order**)
 - c. Various persecutions necessitated hiding. (**The place has never been significant.**)
4. History tells us the Roman Emperor Constantine started the move into church buildings.
 - a. When he named it the official religion of Rome, he built some buildings for the church.
 - b. The Roman government owned pagan temples so some were given to the church.
 - 1) These were previously called "The Temple Of ____ ." (**whatever idol worshipped**)
 - 2) When "Christianized" they were called The Temple Of God or the House of God.
 - c. When pagans were converted to Christianity, they kept using their existing temples.

* **This had a profound effect on the worship of the church.**
5. The scriptures clearly teach that the church is not a manmade structure of any kind.
 - a. **Acts 11: 22-** The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.
 - b. Clearly, no building has ears.
 - * c. **The church building is a convenience; there is NO doctrine about it.** (**opinions**)

B. The church is not a social club.

1. All healthy and faithful churches must have an active social life.
 - a. Humans are social creatures. One place or another, we will have social interaction.
 - b. Christians are commanded to separate themselves from the world. (**II Cor 6: 17 +**)
 - c. The social needs of a separated people can only be met among themselves.
2. HOWEVER, function cannot be understood as form.
 - a. Maintaining a healthy and sanctified social life is only a function of the church, **NOT** what it is.
 - b. **ILL.- People eat and process food, but we are not food processors.**
- * 3. Just as a church which does not have a social life is not Christ's church, so any church which functions primarily as a social organization is not Christ's church.

C. The church is not a worship society.

1. Just as the church socializes, but is not a social society; likewise, it conducts worship assemblies, but is not a worship society.
2. Christ's church must have regular assemblies, but does not consist of/for assemblies.
 - a. The church does not function only when assembled.
 - b. The church does not cease to exist when not assembled.
3. All people of faith worship on a daily basis.
 - a. We pray and meditate daily.
 - b. We praise God and give thanks daily. (**Express our hearts to Him.**)
 - c. We seek God's will daily by reading and by studying the scriptures.
 - d. We seek to serve God daily by evangelizing and by meeting pressing needs.
- * **NO person of faith restricts his worship to a church building or to an assembly.**

II. To help us understand Christ's Church, God relates it to us in various figures.**A. Christ's church is called His "Household" or His house.**

1. **I Tim. 3: 15-** ... *I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*
2. A household is composed of many members working together under one head.
3. The family shares one set of values and works toward one common goal, loyalty, etc.

B. Christ's church is called a "Body."

1. **Eph. 1: 22-23** And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.
2. A body has many members which all function under the direction of one head.
 - a. Christ is the head of His body, the source of all authority for His church.
 - b. Every Christian is a member of that ONE body. (**I Cor. 12: 12-27 -cf- Eph. 4: 4**)
3. A body is only healthy and strong when :
 - a. Every part performs its specific task. (**Cf- Eph. 4: 11f**)
 - b. Every part works in coordination with every other part.
 - *c. **This very directly applies to Christ's church.** (**Universal, Regional, Local**)

ILL. - The physical requirements necessary for a basketball player to score.

C. Christ calls church His "bride."

1. **II Cor. 11: 2-** For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. (**Cf.- Rev. 19: 7, 21: 9**)
2. A bride comes to her husband pure and holly.
3. A bride is consecrated to her husband to the exclusion of all others.
4. A bride is one chosen by her husband.
5. A bride is committed to her husband for life.

D. Christ's church is His kingdom on the earth and also in Heaven.

1. **II Thes. 2: 12-** ... so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (**Vs. 10-12**)
2. **Col. 1: 13-** For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,
3. There are three basic requirements for a kingdom to exist.
 - a. Kingdoms are ruled over by a king. (**Kingdom = King's Domain**)
 - b. A kingdom must have territory and borders.
 - c. A kingdom must have laws. (**incl. terms, privileges and responsibilities of citizenship**)

* **By these figures God gives us insight into His view of His church.**

III. Christ's church is people; it is you and me and every person God has saved.

A. The original word translated "church" is very descriptive.

1. The English word from which **church** evolved has a different meaning than the original.
 - a. It is "kirk" and it was used by the ancient Druids before Christianity.
 - b. It comes from the Greek word "kyriskon" which means belonging to the Lord.
2. As used in the N.T., the word "church" translates a compound Greek word :
 - a. "*Ek*" meaning "out of"
 - b. "*Klisis*" meaning "a calling"
 - c. Thus, "*Ekklesia*" meaning "called out of"
3. This is not a special religious word, but one in common use.
 - a. In the N.T. it is used to describe an unruly gathering. (**Acts 19: 32, 41**)
 - b. In the N.T. it is used to describe a gathering with an official function. (**Acts 19: 39**)
 - c. In the N.T. it is used to describe the nation of Israel brought out of Egypt. (**Acts 7: 38**)
4. **Therefore, Christ's church is a people who have been segregated out from others by Christ for His purpose.**

B. When one is called out (segregated) from others, he becomes separate from them.

1. Christians are clearly instructed to separate themselves from the world.

II Cor. 6: 17- "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord.
"And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you."
2. Christians are no longer to function as part of the world's system.

Col. 1: 13- For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,
3. Called out people do not seek the approval of the in the world.

John 15: 19- If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

C. When one is saved, he is called out and added to all others who are called out.

1. The Lord adds ALL who are saved to His body of believers. (**To the church**)
 - a. **Acts 2: 47-** ... And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Cf.- **5:14**)
 - b. **I Cor. 12: 18-** But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.
 - c. **Since God adds all saved people to His church, there are no saved people outside His church. The church is ALL saved people.**

2. Salvation and being added to the church occurs when a believer is baptized.

- a. **Acts 2: 41-** So then, those who had received his word were baptized;
and that day there were added about three thousand souls. (Cf . Vs- 47)
- b. **Mark 16:15-16** Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to all creation.
¹⁶ He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved;
but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

CONCLUSION :

A. THEREFORE , if you are a baptized believer, YOU are the church.

- 1. When we talk about God planning the church before He created the world, we are talking about God having planned to save **YOU**.
- 2. When God purchased the church with the blood of Jesus, He purchased **YOU**.
- 3. **YOU** are God's representative on the earth, the instrument to accomplish His will.
- 4. It is **YOU** that God relies upon to nurture His children into His likeness.
- 5. Are **YOU** being ever vigilant to catch those who are falling away ?
- 6. **YOU** are the platform from which God is glorified on earth and in the Heavenly realm.
- 7. It is **YOU** who is standing in the very entranceway to Heaven.
- 8. God placed the eternal destiny of the world in **YOUR** hands. **Are you proclaiming ?**
- 9. Are **YOU** preserving the world by the holiness of your life ?
- 10. **YOU** are the one God wants to stand up for Him in this world, to reason with the lost about righteousness and Judgment to come.

B. You are the most important thing in the world to God; YOU ARE HIS CHURCH.

- 1. He wants to be the most important thing in your life.
- 2. What is God to **YOU** ?
- 3. What is God's church to you ?

C. Apply and appeal.