

The Udenominational Nature of the Church

Rom. 12:2

Introduction:

1. Were we to conduct interviews at Wal-Mart and ask people their perceptions of the church I would expect a wide variety of responses.
2. Some might be critical of “church leaders” who say one thing and do something else. “Many of them just seem to be interested in money.”
3. Some might say they object to “organized religion,” meaning that they are generally opposed to religious institutions although they are interested in God and a personal relationship with Him.
4. Some might say, “I just don’t understand why there are so many different churches. One says one thing and another says something else.”
5. Others more sympathetic might say, “They are all good. They are all just different ways of getting to heaven.”
6. I hear statements such as this all the time. I believe they are reflective of legitimate concerns that people have, but they are also reflective of information gathered from the world that has resulted in confusion.
7. The God of the Bible is a God of organization. Our minds need to be transformed and renewed by God so that we come out of the darkness of confusion and into the light of understanding and comprehension.
8. This transformation occurs as a result of our learning the will of God, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
9. Let’s look at what the Bible says about the church.

Discussion:

- I. The word that is translated “church” in the N. T. is from the Greek word “ekklesia,” which comes from “ek” meaning “out” and “kaleo” meaning “to call.”
 - A. Thus the term designates those who are “called out.”
 - B. Observe its use in the following passages.
 1. The term is used in Acts 19:32, 39, 41.
 - a. Paul had been preaching in Ephesus.
 - b. As a result of his preaching some realized if the people heeded Paul’s message then their business of making silver shrines to the goddess Artemis would be in jeopardy.
 2. The crowd was filled with rage and screamed, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.” They rushed into the theater dragging Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions.
 3. Verse 30 says, “Paul wanted to go into the assembly (“dēmon”). This is not the word “ekklesia” but is a synonymn. Our word “mob” might be best used here. NASB margin has “people.”
 4. “Ekklesia” is not used until verses 32, 39, 41.
 5. There is another synonymn used in this text in verse 40: “sustrophēs.” It is

translated in the NASB as “disorderly gathering.”

6. Yet another synonym is used in verses 33 and 35, “ochlon,” translated “crowd” in the NASB.
- C. On the basis of this context “ekklesia” is a gathering of people, an assembly. In this case it is certainly not a building, nor even an assembly of Christians. It is “a crowd,” “an assembly,” “mob of people.” While this crowd seems to have been worshipers of Artemis of the Ephesians there is nothing particularly religious about the term “ekklesia.”
- D. The English word “church” conjures up ideas of
 1. A building for public worship. Ex. The church was full on Sunday.
 2. The public worship of God. Ex. He is never late for church.
 3. An organization, ecclesiastical authority, or entity that people may be associated with. Ex. The Catholic Church seems to be changing its teachings.
 4. A group with the same religious beliefs or creed and therefore under the same authority or denomination. Ex. The Methodist Church, The Presbyterian Church.
 5. Such is not the use of “ekklesia” in Scripture although sometimes what we do is transfer our modern use of the term into Scripture. No wonder we are confused.
 6. The Bible never uses the word “church” in these senses.

II. The Bible does use the term “church” in a special sense to designate God’s people.

A. In Matt. 16:18 Jesus says, “I will build My church.”

1. What is He going to build? Not a building. Not an organization, ecclesiastical authority or entity that people may be associated with. Not a denomination or group of denominations.
2. He is going to build an assembly, a group, a congregation of people who all confess that He is the Christ the Son of God (Matt. 16:13ff).
3. It is interesting to note that in this text His church is equivalent to “the kingdom of heaven.”

B. 1 Cor. 1:2 identifies the church as

1. Those who have been sanctified (made holy) in Christ Jesus. Set apart in their relationship to Him. Cf. marriage.
2. Saints by calling. 2 Thess. 2:24 speaks of those called through the gospel. The message goes out and people are called out of the world and give themselves to

the

Lord.

3. Thus they call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ because of their special relationship with Him.

C. Eph. 1:22-23 identifies Christ as the head of the church which is His body. Implied here is a relationship and authority.

D. Acts 20:28 says that He purchased the church with His blood.

III. The church is not a building. The church is not an institution that people get into. The church is a group of people.

- A. The church is a collective of people like a herd is a collective of cattle, a covey a collective of birds. The church is a bunch of people called out by God. Other collective nouns like church are: flock, troop, crowd, congregation, family, assembly, crew, team.
- B. The church is the people who acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 16:18). They are separated to Christ, thus are made holy. They are those who submit to His headship and are purchased with His blood.
- C. What did the people constitute who were “added to the number” of the saved on Pentecost? See Acts 2:47.
 - 1. They were believers.
 - 2. Who had repented. i.e., they had turned to God.
 - 3. They were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.
 - 4. On the basis of Mk. 16:16 they were saved.

IV. There are significant implications from these truths.

- A. The church is not an institution that people get into in order to be saved. The church is saved people.
- B. Allegiance to some religious institution is not the basis of salvation. Allegiance to Christ is the basis of salvation.
- C. The teaching of religious institutions may change, but the teaching of Christ does not.
- D. The saved are the church. Some ask, “Do I have to be a member of the church in order to be saved?” That’s who the church is.
- E. “Are you saying there is only one church? Well what about all the different denominations?” Ever wonder why you don’t read about different denominations in the Bible? There weren’t any! Being saved constitutes one a member of the called out body.

Conclusion:

- 1. Isn’t this a different way of thinking?
- 2. It takes us a while to get accustomed to this way of thinking when we have thought like our society for so long.
- 3. It takes a while for us to change our language and some of us are so steeped in the world’s way of thinking it is hard for us to think any other way.
- 4. Some years ago 7-Up came it with an ad where they described themselves as the Uncola. Not Pepsi Cola. Not Coca-Cola. Not RC Cola. They were not a cola at all.
- 5. The Lord’s church is not a denomination. It is not a group of denominations. It is not inter-denominational. It is undenominational.