

The Importance of the Church

by Dr. Edward Watke, Jr.

- Why do we have a local church? What is the purpose of the church? Is the church important?, if so why? How should we regard the local church?
- Christ said, “I will build my church”? How significant is this? The word church is used about 119 times, and over a 100 times in the Word of God it is speaking of the local church in a local place -- doing God’s will, for God’s glory in God’s way.
- Our relation to the church is directly influenced by our understanding of the church.
- The word church is used in many different ways on the part of mankind. Many of these ways are not biblical, correct, and are often confusing and erroneous.
- We often speak of 1) a building as the church, 2) we referring to an invisible, universal collection of believers and we call this the church. 3) We speak of a certain denomination or group as a church.
- If we had time to study all of the Word of God about the church we would see that Christ used many word pictures to teach us about the local church and its ministry.

Christ used these imageries --

Rock -- Matt. 7:24; I Pet 2:5

Building -- I Cor. 3:9; Eph. 2:21,22

Field -- I Cor. 3:9

Body -- Eph. 2:22-23; Col. 1:18; I Cor. 12:27

Bride -- Jh 3:29; Eph. 5:23-33

Flock -- Lk 12:32; Jh 10:1-16; Acts 20:28

Vine -- Jh 15:1-5

Temple -- I Cor. 3:16

Pillar -- and House -- I Tim. 3:15

A Candlestick -- Rev. 1:20

**All of these are local and not universal for this is where
the New Testament puts the emphasis.**

I. IT IS SEEN IN THE MEANING OF THE WORD, CHURCH!

A. The Word church means gathered ones -- called out ones -- An assemble of people called out to do His will, to Honor Him, to live for His glory and honor, to Do His will -- Acts 2:41

B. Ecclesia -- called out ones; to come, to bring together, to call out from among.

C. God makes much of the church in this age -- The Church is God-given, a Divinely appointed institution for this age. Nothing can substitute for the local church in its important of place, purpose, aim, and goal.

D. Teaching of Scripture about the church is just as plain, and positive as about any other doctrine in the Word of God. God speaks of His local church!

1. Concept of average saved person is indefinite and vague.
2. There are over 100 usages of the word Church or the word ***ecclesia*** in the New Testament. These refer primarily to a particular assembly of baptized believers in Christ on earth. (See the study on Baptism in the book.. *Basic Bible Truths for New Believers...* on the web site under- Discipleship -- books.)
3. In I Timothy 3:15; 16 Paul write to Timothy to teach the converts to *“behave themselves in the church, the house of God, which is the pillar and ground of the truth.”* The local church is the household of God.
4. Paul spoke to the elder of Ephesus that they would **feed the church of God**, the flock over which Holy Spirit had made them overseers. Acts 20:28
5. According to I Corinthians 12:12-27 the church is made up of a body of believers who are individually gift by the Holy Spirit to minister to the local body.
6. In Revelation chapters two and three we find the messages to the churches, to specific local churches that existed in that day.

II. IMPORTANCE IS SEEN IN GOD’S PURPOSE FOR THE CHURCH:

Satan’s trick is to get us to neglect the local church -- to put emphasis only upon a universal church that will never meet here on this earth-- that will never send a missionary, or take on offering, or witness to a lost soul.

God does not put the emphasis on the universal, invisible church (body and bride of Christ) that is seen only through the local church -- but He puts the emphasis on the local church.

A. To Bring Glory to God: Eph. 3:20,21

1. We are to be to the praise of His glory. 1:12
2. The saved are primarily to bring glory to God in action, word, deed, word, life -- collectively and individually.
3. We are to walk in His power and live unto Him.

B. To be a Habitation of God through the Spirit:

Eph. 2:19-22; I Tim. 3:15 The church is the house of God -- the place of His rule and His indwelling, etc.

C. To build up its members spiritually

Eph. 4:11-12; Acts 20:28; 20:32; Acts 11

D. To Bear Witness to the Truth

I Tim. 3:15; The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

E. To evangelize the world

Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:6; Acts 13: business of the church is to win the lost

III. AS SEEN IN ITS EFFECT ON MY LIFE:

A. It will deepen your fellowship In John 20 we read of Thomas's absence and his lost fellowship. In Act 2:41,42, we read they continued in the apostles teaching, in fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers.

B. It will guard against your going astray.
Heb. 10:25; The local Church very important.

C. It will enlarge your service. Barnabas ministered in Antioch because of a local church where he could serve. (Acts 11) Paul had ministry because of local churches where he could serve. See Acts 9, 13. The same could be said of Philip in Acts 8 and Peter in Acts 2 and chapter 10.

D. It will strengthen your testimony and deepen your prayer life.
Acts 2-4; Acts. 15:41; Acts 12; 13