

We Are the Church

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“We are the Church.” Many people who attend “church” at some building or institution claim to recognize this as a truth yet they do not recognize how many deceptions are built into this seemingly simple idea. First we must deal with the linguistic deception.

“Church” (the English word as can be found in any worthwhile dictionary) refers to the “Christian”: 1) building, 2) clergy, 3) religion and 4) people.

When we compare these meanings to the New Testament, though, we find that

1) “The Most High God does not dwell in buildings made by human hands” (Acts 7:48) so the “church” building is *not* His house.

2) There is no exalted clergy class whatsoever in the New Testament excepted to be forbidden (1 Pet. 5:3) yet the clergy derives their name from the Greek word used in this very verse that originally described *all* the people (and not a select, exalted few “leaders”) as God’s heritage or portion. (see *kleros* [2819])

3) “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (Jas. 1:27) More money is spent on “church” buildings and clergy salaries than on all outreach, charity and missions combined and showing how much like the world we can be and still be a “Christian” is a very acceptable norm at many, if not most “churches.”

4) The word “church” has historically been used to translate the Greek word *ekklesia*. [1577] This word *ekklesia* is a political word that refers to the political assembly that gathered to attend to the affairs and issues of their particular locale. The Christians appropriated the word (just as they had with other words such as *agape* [26] which now refers to God’s unique and transcendent love for mankind) and thus *ekklesia* refers to the people who have been translated from darkness to light and are now to gather to attend to the affairs and issues of Christ’s kingdom as they need addressed in their particular locale. Thus *people* – the *fourth* definition of the English word “church” – is the only sense in which the word “church” has any relationship with *ekklesia*.

Three parts deception, one part truth – tells the story very nicely. When we look more closely at the two words, *ekklesia* and “church,” like this, we discover these serious discrepancies between the meanings – and these discrepancies are so serious that one even wonders how modern translators feel justified in using the English word “church” to translate the Greek word *ekklesia*!

But the deception continues even further as many people have the understanding that “church” does, at its deepest roots, mean “people.” Whether they are able to truly set aside the three parts of deceptions in function and in practice is indeed another question – but, at least for

this discussion, let's consider the people who at least believe the truth that "church" equals "people" and forego the other three parts of deceptions for the moment.

Thus the people who truly belong to Christ are indeed the same people group as the right meaning of the improperly translated word "church." But let us look at even this more closely. "People" is a plural word. One person cannot be a "people." This has a profound impact on our understanding of what it means to be church. Since the word "church" equals the word "people," the word "church" is also a plural word. Thus when we recognize that the church is the people, then "I" (assuming I am a genuine member of Christ's people) am the church – at least my singular part of it. But all it takes, then, for the church, the people, to be gathered is for one other member to be present. Wherever "I" and at least one other member of the people of Christ stand in the same place at the same time, the church has gathered.

And this is precisely what Jesus said. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Mt. 18:20) Because men have been trying to build their sand castles and personal fiefdoms, they have missed the many, many times Jesus was quietly building His *ekklesia* and leading them into life and light in spite of the darkness of the sand castle and personal fiefdom of some mere man. His kingdom resembles a net more than a castle (Mt. 13:47), a net tied with knots of two and three strands. (Eccl. 4:12) That men have overlooked this for centuries does not negate the truth of it.

True church, the gathering of Christ's people in His name, happens whenever two or three people come together because they are where He would have them be, doing whatever He would have them do. It is not based on a calendar or clock setting – it is based on the leading of the Holy Spirit.

And we find all this contained in the meaning of the word *ekklesia*! The *ekklesia* were "called out" of their routine lives by a herald to attend to the affairs of the place in which they lived. This is the role of the Holy Spirit – to call us out of our routine lives so that we may attend to the affairs of Christ's kingdom of light and truth. It is only centuries of deception and darkness that associates a gathering of Christ's people with a previously scheduled event where a passive audience listens to a supposedly superior "man of God" (another deception!) deliver a monologue "sermon" (yet another deception!) so that the "flock" will be "fed." (still yet another deception!)

Our mindset needs to change. True church does not happen on Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings. It happens whenever we are personally led into the company of another genuine believer. Whether this is by our choice or "coincidence" is immaterial. If the Holy Spirit has a purpose for this meeting and we submit to that purpose, we have gathered in His name and we are attending to the affairs of His kingdom. That is true *ekklesia*, true church (again using the right meaning of the improperly translated word "church.")

Now, if we know that we are the church, the people, the *ekklesia* of Christ *whenever* we come together, at what point can we ever leave church, people or *ekklesia*? In order to leave, we must leave Christ and what He is doing in our lives – something which is possible, especially if what we do is more "church" than *ekklesia*, but it is certainly not as easy as leaving a "church" has become! When do we ever stop *being* church, the people, the *ekklesia*?

When we know this, then there are no denominational walls or hierarchies to be concerned about because *we* are the church, the people, the *ekklesia* with *whomever* Christ has received. And if Christ has received that other – something which becomes apparent rather quickly – who do we think we are to avoid or shun or neglect or judge or oppress them? By

what right do we think ourselves better than another if Christ is the one who saves us all? We must let our minds be renewed as to exactly what Christ is building.

It is to be hoped that laying out all this deception and confusion that attends the word “church” accomplishes two purposes:

1) That we will jettison the word “church” from our vocabulary as a good thing. Let us reserve it for the man-made and demonically inspired accumulations that have attached themselves to the original Greek word. And let us retain the transliterated form, *ekklesia*, as our term to refer to whatever was God’s original intent for His people. At the least, this gives us a very clear, very precise manner in which to differentiate between the two – a discussion that is not always so very clear and very precise. And,

2) That we will recognize that God is not the author of all this deception and confusion. (Jn. 8:44, 1 Cor. 14:33, etc.) Satan is the architect of the “church” (the building, the clergy, the false religion) even as Christ has built and is still building His *ekklesia* and it is still true that the prison gates of death and darkness cannot overcome His people who live in His light and life. (Mt. 16:18)

The way of following Christ is simple. (2 Cor. 11:3) It does not need to be complicated with “church” rules and regulations and by-laws. (yet another indication of the source of the “church”!) “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (2 Cor. 3:17) And “you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” (Gal. 5:13) One simply cannot serve the “one anothers” in our life in the context of “church” so readily as we can apart from the context of “church.” As *ekklesia*, we can be individually and corporately led to do the things that do make for a better world and that demonstrates the love of God for lost and fallen mankind. As “church,” we must wait for and compete against the “pastor’s” vision of “the work of God” – a vision that is most likely a demonic deception of one kind or another.

We are called to come out of all forms of “Christian” and “Babylonian” idolatry (2 Cor. 6:17-18, 1 Cor. 5:10-11, Rev. 18:4) To ignore this call leaves us planted firmly in the apostasy, the great falling away from the faith that happens before Christ’s return. (2 Ths. 2:3, Mt. 24:10) If we are content to be in this condition, we will certainly not be prepared for His return and will instead be among those who failed to love the truth and preferred unrighteousness and were put in our place among those who are perishing. (2 Ths. 2:11-12) If there is any chance that we are playing “church” rather than being His *ekklesia*, we should be very frightened indeed.

Let he who has ears hear.

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