

THE CHURCH - GOD'S MASTERPIECE

So many people including Christians have no revelation of the greatness of the Church in the eyes of God.

Hundreds used to go but now seldom go or not at all - why?

For me there is no greater institution on earth - why do I think that? In this article I'll endeavour to answer these two questions.

But some so called Churches aren't Churches.

So when does a Church cease to be a Church?

- 1. When Christ is no longer its head.
- 2. When Jesus is not honoured. (No true union is possible.)
- 3. When its members live no differently to the world.
- 4. When it can no longer be called a company of called out ones. (Greek ekklesia "called out" -- ek = out; kalo = to call.) In the world but not of the world.
- 5. When it's no longer the conscience of society.
- 6. When sin is ignored.
- 7. When the Bible is no longer its authority.
- 8. When its members no longer attend (voluntary).
- 9. When a church says we have it all, if you don't join us you not in.
- 10. When it loses its sense of mission.

Matthew 13: 46 is about the merchant seeking valuable pearls and having found a special one sells everything to buy it. The aspect of the Kingdom of God here surely refers to Jesus paying with His very life to purchase the Church, the pearl, He loves. That's how much He values it.

Acts 20: 28 says the Church was purchased with His own blood.

Here is a passing thought: A pearl is from a shell fish that has an irritation within its shell; that irritation causes it to produce pearl. In church you may have irritations, but let those irritations produce pearl instead of conflict.

Some think they can belong to the Universal Church and not be joined to a local Church. There are two views of the Church presented in the Bible:

- 1. The Universal Church Matthew 16: 18 "Upon this Rock" - Every person who truly believes that Jesus is the Son of God makes up the Church. That is, through every generation throughout the world.
- 2. The Local Church, within the universal Church, makes it visible, tangible and observable Matthew 18: 17 "tell it to the Church" This means it must be local, you can't tell it to the Church worldwide.

The Local is seen in 1 Peter 2: 5 " --- you also, as **living stones**, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." You can't build together universally it has to be local.

Also in Eph 2:22 it is speaking of a local expression: "*in whom you also are being built together for a **dwelling place** of God in the Spirit.*"

Almost every reference to the Church in New Testament is local (see-able, work-able). The Church at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Colossi etc.

The Word "Church" is used 73 times in New Testament and referred to hundreds of times without using the word "Church".

Also Hundreds of examples of the "Church" are in the Old Testament E.g. Israel was like the Church going through the wilderness in Exodus - coming out of Egypt (the World system) and journeying to Canaan. That journey contains great pictures of a Church preparing to be the powerful Church that God wants to display and act for Him.

The Churches Origin: Ephs. 3: 9-12 Seen here as a mystery hidden in past ages now revealed, and that gentile heathens would become part of that mystery the Church.

This great mystery was revealed and came into being at Pentecost - the Church was born as the Holy Spirit was poured out.

Note how they responded: 14 Qualities see verses 41-47.

It says in 1 Cor. 12: 15 that we are baptised by One Spirit into One Body.

If we are immersed in the Spirit we are immersed in the Body.

The Church is Christ displayed - it is the extension of Christ's visit to earth. If it were not for the Church Satan would have turned this world into hell.

It's Destiny:

- The Church will survive the world, be in bliss when the world is in ruin. Mat 16
- It will be protected through the tribulation. Rev. 3: 10
- It will be presented to Him glorious, without spot. Eph. 5: 27
- It will be translated. Thes. 4; 1 Cor. 15: 51; 2 Thes. 2: 1-4
- It is going to have a great marriage feast. Rev. 19: 7-9
- It is the New Jerusalem. Rev. 21

My Vision:

- To gather a people out of worldly living to become wholly consecrated to God Exod. 3: 10; 13: 2, 9.
- To become established as individuals and a company (corporate) living sensitively under the direction of our Lord Jesus for the full pleasure of God the Father. Col. 2: 10

In the light of all this, why don't people come to church?

- 1. Don't know God and His great purposes for the Church.
- 2. Have been stumbled by it's imperfections.

(E.g. Dr Culyer saw Cologne Cathedral in the building stage and said, "What an ugly structure." It was all covered with scaffolding etc., but when the architect showed him the picture of the final building he exclaimed, "It is so beautiful." So it is with the Church, we need to see the end, a glorious Church.)

- 3. Spiritually lazy - "mind their own things" no desire to sacrifice.
- 4. Have come and cannot relate - come to get rather than to give.
- 5. Wilfully indifferent.

Hebrews 10 says, *"forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as is the custom of some."*

If you think you can be a Christian without being part of a local Church you've missed the main teaching of the Bible. Also missed an exciting part of life's blessing. Also done your future generations a great disservice.

I spoke with a prominent 55 year old businessman from our city and found he had been brought up a Christian attending Church. I asked, "Did you decide not to go when you were a young man?" He answered, " I was distracted by football on Sunday so it became a habit pattern not to attend; now I greatly regret it, my family is in dysfunction, my daughter is hopelessly lost on drugs, I don't know my way back." How sad!

Here's a good story:

A young man hadn't been attending Church for a while, so a loving gentle old brother invited him to come to his home for a visit. The young man expected a telling off, but no, the old man invited him to come and sit up close to the fire with him. Without saying a word the old man bent down and took hold of a glowing ember with the tongs and placed it on the side. Of course it soon lost its glow. After a while, in silence, he took hold of the now black ember and placed it back on the fire among the other glowing embers - its glow was soon restored. The young man stood up and said, "I get the point of this lesson, I'll be in Church on Sunday." He kept going all his life.

If you've dropped out of Church, return, be there to give, not just to get. If hurt or irritated put out pearl.

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