

# THE CHURCH

There are many church buildings and church organizations on this earth. Many of the people, who are members of the different church organizations, are also members of God's Church. About 1900 years ago the apostle Paul instructed the spiritual leaders of Ephesus: "Feed the CHURCH OF GOD, WHICH HE HATH PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD." (Acts 20:28). Very interesting is this statement concerning God's Church. Since the day that Paul spoke to those elders many members of God's Church have departed to be with Christ. (Philippians 1:23).

Concerning the apostles Peter and John, we read in Acts 4:23: "And being let go they went to their own company." This word "company" suggests their own private group. In I Corinthians 14:23 we read of the church coming together. In Hebrews 10:25 we read, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." So every member of God's Church should be identified with other such members of like precious faith and should have a regular meeting-place or assembly. But every member of God's Church, in the matter of "church membership" should faithfully obey II Corinthians 6:14, "be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." And every member of God's Church should faithfully obey Ephesians 6:18, and pray with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. Perhaps a saint has Scriptural authority for saying that his first responsibility is to pray for the local assembly to which he belongs, but it is more than doubtful that he has the Bible right to say that his first responsibility is, to pray for his own denomination. Every member of the Body of Christ includes all of these saints and their Scriptural duty and privilege is to pray for every fellow-member in that ONE BODY. (Ephesians 4:4).

Church officers may receive from the members of some particular local assembly the right to induct others into that membership. But only God Himself can receive a person into His Church; that is, cause a believer to be joined to the body of Christ by being joined to Christ. "So we, being many, are One Body in Christ, and everyone members, one of another." (Romans 12:5). This means, of course, that all saved Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists and Congregationalists are members one of another. But it certainly does not mean that all of the members of these denominations are members one of another. No intelligent student of the Bible believes that a person is a member of God's Church because that person has joined some denominational organization. But every such student knows that God's way of joining God's Church is told in I Corinthians 12:12 and 13: "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; SO ALSO IS CHRIST: For by one Spirit are we all baptized into ONE BODY."

No man can baptize his fellow-man into the Body of Christ. This can be done only by almighty God. However, it is true that faith cometh by hearing the Word of God and sinners cannot believe unless they hear and they cannot hear unless God's saints go to them with the saving gospel, to plant and water, so that God will give the increase, and add such as are being saved. (Romans 10:12 to 15 . . . Acts 2:47). "And believers were the more added to the Lord." (Acts 5:14).

In Hebrews 10:10 and Hebrews 13:12 we are told how sinners became saints: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ:" "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might SANCTIFY the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." Then note I Corinthians 6:9 to 11, how God makes living saints out of dead sinners, how God justifies and sanctifies believing murderers, drunkards, thieves, adulterers, which is the very same in the

case of the believing self-righteous, moral, religious person . . . “Such were some of you; but ye are washed; but ye are SANCTIFIED; but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” In Titus 3:5 to 8 this is called “by the washing of regeneration,” which God bestows.

The moment God saves the believing sinner that very moment that one becomes a saint and a member of the Church, Which is the Body of Christ. (Ephesians 1:23; Ephesians 4:4 and 5 . . . Colossians 1:25 and 26). In II Corinthians 1:21 and 22 we read that God establishes the believer and anoints the believer, “God, Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

In Ephesians 4:9 to 13 we learn how God is building up the Body of Christ: “For the building-up of the Body of Christ, Till we all come in the unity (oneness) of the faith, unto a perfect man.” God is very jealous concerning His Son and His Son’s Body; so let us be careful that we are not trying to build up something in competition with God, instead of being labourers together with God in building the ONE BODY of Ephesians 4:4.

The word “CHURCH” is found more than one hundred times in the Books from Acts to Revelation; twice in Matthew 18:17. The Greek word is “EKKLESIA.” In the Greek translation of the Old Testament Scriptures this word “EKKLESIA” is used quite frequently and is generally translated “congregation,” as it is in Acts 19:32, 39 and 41, where the Greek word is used to describe an angry, lawless mob of heathen.

Where the Greek word “EKKLESIA” refers to God’s Church, it does not refer to an assembly-room or meeting-place, but to a company of people; for the word “EKKLESIA” means “CALLED-OUT.”

Therefore, God’s Church (Ekklesia) is composed of believers, or saints, whom God by the Holy Spirit and the gospel of Christ has called out of this condemned world to be joined to Christ, as one flesh, to make up the one new man of Ephesians 2:15 and Ephesians 5:31 and 32.

Every member of Christ’s Body, God’s Church, should gather regularly with other members of the JOINT-BODY of Ephesians 3:6 but should be very careful as to what he joins.

In Ephesians 5:25 to 27 we learn that Christ is going to present THE CHURCH unto Himself, a glorious, spotless, blameless, holy Church. How sad it is to know that many members of church-organizations on this earth will not be there. Will you?