

## The Work of The Church #1 (The Church)

### Introduction:

The fact that there is division among churches of Christ is a sad reality. It means in practical terms that a Christian cannot conscientiously worship with or fellowship with all local churches of Christ. I wish that every local church of Christ was such that one could have complete confidence in worshipping in such a place. But the fact is there are some local churches that are not sound in the faith because they practice things for which they have no authority. One area in which this is especially clear is in the work God has designed the church to do. Over the next few weeks we want to look at some of the issues relating to the work of the church that have divided brethren over the years. And it might be added that if you are visiting with us and you attend a mainstream denomination, it is important that you too pay close attention to the things that we will be saying this morning. Why? Because it was denominational churches that first corrupted the work of the church and almost every, if not all, denominations today do things for which they simply do not have the scriptural authority and therefore the right to do. And so if you are a part of either a denomination or a local church of Christ that is doing things that are unscriptural and unauthorized, you should want to part company with that situation as soon as possible. Why? Because in your present situation, you are not abiding in the doctrine of Christ (**2 Jn. 9-11; Col. 3:17**).

### Lesson:

#### I. What Is The Church?

**A.** Now, before we can really focus in on the work of the church, we need to know what the church is. So we begin this series of lessons by asking the question, "What is the church?" First, let me say that the church is something that Jesus promised to build (**Matt. 16:18**). The word church is from the Greek word **EKKLESIA (ek-klay-see'-ah)** and means "the call out." It refers in a general sense to any assembly or congregation of people as it is used in **Acts 7:38** and **Acts 19:32**. But Jesus wasn't talking about just any assembly or congregation of people because He didn't just say "I will build a church," but rather He said "I will build MY church." And that is the church that we are concerned with in this lesson. Not just a church. Not just any church, but the church that Jesus Christ built. The church that was called out by Jesus through the gospel of Christ and which is composed of those who have been built by, bought by, redeemed by and separated by the precious blood of Jesus. Now let's look closer at this.

1. **The church is made up of those that have obeyed the gospel (Rom. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:4-6; 2 Thess. 2:13-14).**
2. **The church is made up of those who have been born again (Jn. 3:3-5).**
3. **The church is made up of those who have followed the Spirit revealed, incorruptible, indestructible and everlasting Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23-25; Acts 2:36-41, 47).**

**B.** Now, the church of Christ is referred to in two ways in the Bible.

1. **The universal church (Matt. 16:18; Heb. 12:23).**

Now in regard to the universal church, Jesus only built one (**1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 4:4; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18**). The one church is not made up of churches, denominations, or institutions. The church is made up of Christians who have put on Christ in the waters of baptism. Pay attention to me: the church is not made up of Baptist Christians, Lutheran Christians, Presbyterian Christians, Methodist Christians or Catholic Christians. The church is made up of CHRISTIANS, PERIOD!

2. **The local church (Acts 8:1; 9:31; 1 Cor. 1:2).**

A local church is made up of individual Christians who have agreed to work together in a specific geographical location. Now, in this series of lessons, we are interested in the work of the church from this standpoint, that is, the work of the local church.

## **II. The Organization of The Local Church.**

The structure of modern day denominations greatly differ from any thing seen in the New Testament. They place men and councils into positions of authority in which they can make laws and rules to govern their various denominations. They have unscriptural and unauthorized connections one with another. They have an arrangement which consists of a church of churches, i.e., a collection of churches all under the control of one man or a group of men.

Now, let's see how that differs with the New Testament church. In the New Testament church, we find the following:

- A. Christ is the head (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).**

**B. Each local is autonomous.**

The word autonomy means *“self governing or independent .*

**C. Each church had elders, deacons and saints.**

Now, several points must be made here.

1. **Not all churches had elders.** Men had to qualify to be elders (1 Tim. 3:1ff).
2. **Elders of a congregation only oversee the flock which is among them** (1 Pet. 5:2).
3. **There were always a plurality of elders in a local church, and each had equal authority** (Acts 14:23; 20:17).

**Conclusion:**

Now then, as we conclude the opening lesson of this series, we know what the church is and in what sense we will be referring to the church. We will be talking about the local church. Does the local church have a God-given, God sanctioned God approved work to do? The answer is yes. And this will be the basis of this series. However, we are still not ready to look at the specific work that Jesus has given the church to do. First, we have to dismiss the notion that the work of the church is to involve itself in social, recreational and entertaining work. So, next week our emphasis will be on what the work of the church is not.