

What is the Church?

Reading Rev 2v1+8+12+18 Rev 3v1+7+14

Now we have just read about a number of churches in different places!

Eph 1v22 Eph 5v23-32

Note - NONE of them are called Baptist, Pentecostal, Methodist, Church of England, Scotland OR Rome! NONE are called Brethren, Elim, AOG, Presbyterian, Unitarian, Episcopal, Vineyard etc... They were called the church in...

Unfortunately MAN has invented 'denominations!'

We have called THIS CHURCH 'Oaks Community Church' because it sounded better than THE CHURCH in Oaks Community Hall! But that's what we really are... just a church IN a building!

Another thing MAN puts TOO MUCH emphasis on is the 'building' itself! I.e. Big steeples, plush carpets, LOOKS rather than 'practicality!'

It is interesting to note the following facts in regard to the Scriptures...

'**Church**' is mentioned in 79 verses – ALL of which are found ONLY in the NT

'**Churches**' is mentioned in 36 verses – ALL of which are found ONLY in the NT

'**Assembly**' is mentioned in 49 verses – ONLY 5 of these verses are found in the NT

'**Assemblies**' is mentioned in 6 verses – ALL of which are found ONLY in the OT

So what is the 'CHURCH?'

Mat 16v18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Now some say that this 'rock' is Peter the first pope! Nothing could be further from the truth!

For instance, Peter NEVER went to Rome according to the Scriptures!!!

Peter was married & 'popes' CAN'T marry!!! Mat 8:14 **And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.** (see also Mark 1v29-31)

The Roman Catholics say that Peter is the Rock of Mat 16v18 BUT isn't it interesting that we read in Deut 32:31 **For their rock is not as our Rock...**

Note a couple of other verses that PROVE Peter is NOT the 'rock' of Mat 16v18...

John 1:42 **And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.**

So according to John 1v42 Peter is 'a stone' NOT 'a rock' on which the Roman Catholic church have built their FALSE religion upon! Jesus Christ is the 'CHIEF corner stone' not just 'a stone!'

Another verse... Rom 9v33 **As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.**

1 Cor 10v4 **And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.** *How clear do you want it?*

1 Pet 2v5-8 **Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.** So Jesus is 'a stone & a rock' i.e. BOTH!

Peter is just 'a stone!!!'

Mat 21v42+44 **Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.**

Eph 2v20 **And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;** When you lay foundations there are many 'stones' but ONLY ONE 'chief corner stone!' THAT 'stone' or ROCK is Jesus Christ Himself!

Acts 17:29 **Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. God is NOT a 'literal' piece of 'stone' like some religions portray him & bow down to stones & images i.e. statues of Mary, & Jesus & Popes & 'animals' like cows for the Hindu's!!! - Rev 9:20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:** All over the world this morning millions of people are bowing down &

worshipping graven images of stone & wood etc. when the Bible clearly FORBIDS this Exo 20:4 **Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:**

So getting back to - 'What is the church?'

Acts 2:47 **Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.** Obviously the church is NOT the brick building otherwise it wouldn't make any sense... the Lord added to 'the church!'

Acts 5:11 **And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.** Again it CAN'T be the 'building' that fears!

Acts 8:1 **And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.** Obviously 'the church' were all scattered abroad i.e. the PEOPLE! The church IS the people – YOU are 'the church!'

Acts 8:3 **As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.** He persecuted the people; men & women!

Acts 11:22+26 **Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.**

Acts 12:1+5 **Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.**

Acts 13:1 **Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.**

Acts 14:23 **And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.**

So the church is the people & it is 'THE BODY' (spiritual) of Christ! 1 Cor 12v12-14 **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, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether**

we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

1 Cor 12v27 Now **ye are the body of Christ**, and members in particular.

So the church is the spiritual Body of Christ which consists of believers i.e. Christians – It is NOT the ‘building!’

Col 1v18+24 And **he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:**

So if you are a Christian today you are part of Christ’s body & a member of THE CHURCH (forget denominations!) – You are as much a member of Christ’s Body & His church as John Wesley, Billy Graham or Isaac Watts! Don’t let anyone talk you out of that!

Christians put too many restrictions on other Christians these days & it becomes like a separate ‘class’ in some churches! I.e. you can’t break bread because you haven’t been baptised, you can’t come to the ‘business-meetings’ (*though why anyone would want to is beyond me!*) because you are NOT a ‘member’ of ‘this’ church! – Same old, same old!!!

Now leaders of the church are given a commandment in Acts 20v28 **Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.** Now an ‘overseer’ is to FEED the church of God – how & with what?

Mat 4:4 **But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.** Not we are to live on NOT just physical food but SPIRITUAL food i.e. THE WORD OF GOD!

1 Pet 2:2 **As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:** You know why some Christians aren’t growing, because they have NO DESIRE for ‘spiritual-food!’

Heb 5:12+13 **For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.** When you get saved i.e. a NEW Christian (just like a physical BABY) you need MILK! Once you have been fed ‘milk’ for a while you need to move onto ‘solids’ & then eventually STRONG MEAT!!! Most Christians NEVER get to that stage! 1 Cor 3v2 **I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.** Some Christians just can’t DIGEST ‘strong meat!’

Rom 16v5 **Likewise greet the church that is in their house.**

1 Cor 1v2 **Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:** The church is EVERYWHERE!!! Where there are Christians meeting together THAT'S THE CHURCH! Mat 18:20 **For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.** We read of at least FIVE times where the church is referred to as being in someone's house... Acts 8v3, Rom 16v5, 1 Cor 16v19, Col 4v15, Phil 1v2

1 Cor 4v17 **For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.**

1 Cor 10v32 **Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:**

Now like in every church, sadly to say, there will always be 'divisions'... 1 Cor 11:18 **For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.** This happens for many different reasons but the MAIN ONES are these... Christians who do NOT put the word of God as their FINAL AUTHORITY & obey it!!! Christians who want their own way all of the time & therefore do NOT put OTHERS before themselves!!! Christians that go out to cause problems by 'nit-picking!' There are many more which I'm sure you can think of!

If you are called to be a 'leader' of the church you must be able to lead & rule your own household first... 1 Tim 3v5+15 **(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.** Many 'ministers' today do not 'qualify' to lead a church according to the Scriptures!

Why does the church meet on the FIRST day of the week i.e. a Sunday? Because that is what the early Christians used to do & that is what is taught in the Scriptures... Acts 20:7 **And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.**

John 20:1+19 **The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.**

1 Cor 16:2 **Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.** You may also want to look up Exo 12v16 & Acts 2v1 in your own time!

So by now you all should know what the church is & what it is NOT!

You should know who is the HEAD of the church & who is NOT!

You should know who the church was FOUNDED upon & who it was NOT i.e. Peter!

Let us all DO OUR PART in the church of God FOR THE LORD!!!

What is YOUR 'function' in the church?

We are here to WORSHIP GOD & win souls for Him!

Couple of interesting EXTRA verses...

Heb 2v12 **Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.**

3 John 1v9+10 **I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.**

Amen.