

The Church we Read of in the Bible

Introduction:

The Old Testament (OT) spoke of a future king of the seed of David (II Sam. 7:12-17; Isa. 9:6-8) who would establish a kingdom (Isa. 9:6-7) whereby the citizens thereof would be governed by a new law that provided for the forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:31ff / Heb. 8:6-12). When we turn to the New Testament (NT) it is apparent that the king of the seed of David is Jesus (Lk. 1:30-33), His kingdom is the church (compare Isa. 2:2ff; 9:6-7; Jer. 31:34 with Heb. 7:18-19; 8:6ff), and His law is the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). This lesson shall examine the church of Christ as revealed in the NT.

I. What is the church?

- A. Greek *ekklesia* = “an assembly of the citizens regularly summoned, the legislative assembly... to call an assembly... an assembly is held... in the NT the church, either the body, or the place. Hence *ekklesiazō* (to hold an assembly, debate therein, to be a member of the assembly. Hence *ekklesiastes* (a member of the *ekklesia*)” (LS 239).
- B. The church is a kingdom, with a king, law, and citizens.
 - 1. The church is equated to God’s kingdom at Dan. 2:28, 44 and realized on the day of Pentecost (Acts 3:24; cf. I Thess. 2:12).
 - 2. The kingdom has a king (i.e., Jesus) (Isa. 9:6-9; Col. 1:13). Jesus has supreme authority in the church as the head (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22-23).
 - 3. The kingdom has citizens (i.e., those who have answered the call of the gospel message; cf. Acts 2:38-39; II Thess. 2:13-14). So the church is termed, the “*city of the living God*” (Heb. 12:22-24 / Eph. 2:19 [note the use of the phrase “*household of God*” with the church at I Tim. 3:15]).
 - 4. The kingdom has law (i.e., the Law of Christ [Gal. 6:2]). The kingdom’s laws are superior to all other laws due to the fact that it reveals the information whereby man can be forgiven of their sins (Heb. 7:18-19).

II. The Nature of the church is Spiritual as opposed to Social:

- A. The function of the church is not to provide social activities such as recreation and food fest (Rom. 14:17; Jn. 18:36).
- B. The church was never designed to teach secular education such as mathematics, science, or English (Eph. 4:11-13).
- C. The church is spiritual in nature and thereby it is within each individual (a spiritual relationship; a life governed by Jesus’ laws even though we live in a world that does not recognize His headship) (cf. Lk. 17:21; II Cor. 6:16-18 as quoted from Ezekiel 37:26 then see John 14:23; I Jn. 4:12-16).

III. Jesus is the builder of the church:

- A. Jesus said he would build His church (Matt. 16:13ff).
- B. Jesus is identified as the architect of the church (Heb. 3:1-6).
- C. The foundation of the church is Jesus who delivers the gospel message to the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:19-22).
- D. The body of the church is Christ (Eph. 1:22).
- E. The head of the church is Jesus (Eph. 5:22).
- F. The church is built to last for eternity (I Pet. 1:11).
- G. The NT reveals only one church (Eph. 4:4).
- H. The purpose of the church is to make known the wisdom of God (the gracious offer to forgive men of their sins (Jer. 31:31ff; Eph. 3:10-11).

IV. Who makes up the church?

- A.** The word “*church*” is a “noun in the dative case” (Friberg 590). The church then is not an action but a person, place, or thing. The word church involves and assembly of people (cf. definition). Said people are recognized as the church because they have been called by the gospel message to receive the forgiveness of their sins (II Thess. 2:14). Church people are citizens of the kingdom of God (cf. Eph. 2:19).
- B.** The word of God reveals the conditions that must be met for one to receive the forgiveness of sins and be added to the Lord’s church.
 - 1.** Hearing and learning (Jn. 6:44-45).
 - 2.** Obtaining faith in Jesus as the Son of God who died that we might receive the redemption of our sins.
 - 3.** Confessing with our spirit that Christ is the Son of God (Jn. 8:24; Rom. 10:9-10).
 - 4.** Repenting of our sins (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30).
 - 5.** Being buried with Christ in baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
 - 6.** Such people are added to the Lord’s church (Acts 2:41).
 - 7.** Living faithfully all the days of our life (Eph. 4:27; Rev. 2:10).

Conclusion

The church we read of in the Bible is God’s kingdom of saved citizens. These citizens have had their sins forgiven and so continue in faithful service to the Lord. Their kingdom is not a physical one but rather a spiritual one. The laws that govern God’s kingdom (the church) do not govern the world. Though we have no palace, military, nor civil courts we none the less are a part of a spiritual kingdom that shall never be destroyed.