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**Which Church?**

            Some time ago, I heard a young preacher say “ It’s not a church if it doesn’t have an address.” As he continued to preach, it became very obvious to me that he had a “flawed” definition of the word “church.”  As a matter of fact, I would say that most people today probably define  a “church” as a building or a denomination.  They would say that it’s a place where you go on Sundays.  You can join it by signing up or by going through some sort of required program.   I must admit that I have often mis-used this word myself.  However, by searching the scriptures rightly divided, the true meaning of the word “church” is revealed and different churches identified.

            The Greek word translated *church* is *ekklesia* and means *a called out group*. Please note that there is no reference to a building or any denomination rather a called out group or assembly of **PEOPLE**.  The word ekklesia is used in the New Testament of both saved and unsaved groups of people.( Acts19:32 those who gathered to worship the Goddess Diana; Acts 19:39   a court of law was  called a lawful assembly; Acts 19:41  says that the clerk dismissed the ekklesia or assembly).

             As we search the scriptures, we find that God has called out various groups (churches) at various times and for specific reasons.  Acts 7:38 tells of the church in the wilderness.  From this group, God was calling out a people who by faith would be the true **church of Israel**.  In Matthew 16:16-18, we find Peter’s profession of faith and Jesus tells Peter that upon this profession of who Jesus was( The ROCK) Jesus Christ will build his church.  Please note that here **Israel** was still **exclusively** in view as the Lord had just instructed His apostles *“ Go not in the* *way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritians enter not; But go,* *rather* *to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.  And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom* *of heaven is at hand (Matthew 10:5-7).”*  These called out believers were the redeemed of Israel built upon the foundation ROCK of the Lord’s Messiahship and Deity according to the **kingdom gospel**.  In early Acts, we see that *“ The Lord* ***ADDED*** *to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:47).”*   Notice the word **“ADDED.”**  This group was already in existence.  How tragic when denominations hold to Pentecost as the beginning of the church-the Body of Christ.  This is impossible because it all precedes the calling of the apostle Paul and the revealing of the mystery to him.

             In Ephesians 1:22,23, speaking of Christ, it says God, the Father, *“ hath put all things under His feet,* *and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the* *fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”*  This  **church** is given a specific name: **His Body.** In Ephesians 2:16 we read *“ And that He might reconcile both unto God in one* *body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”* This church is made up of Jews and Gentiles and is called the ***Body of Christ*** *.* Nowhere, except in the epistles written by Paul and inspired by the Holy Spirit, will you find this church (Body of Christ) mentioned. By the grace of God, this church, the Body of Christ, is still being added to today.

            In conclusion, it is extremely important to know what church we are discussing or describing.  We must look at the context in which it is used in order to accurately discern what church we are dealing with.  In this dispensation of grace, the church of greatest importance is the church- the Body of Christ.  You don’t sign up to join.  You don’t have to be water baptized to join.  You do not have to take a class or pass a test to join.  You simply have to BELIEVE that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins, was buried for three days, then rose from the dead (1Corinthians 15:1-4).  *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye BELIEVED, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”(* Ephesians 1:13 ).  As ambassadors, let us do our part to share the gospel of reconciliation and see the church-the Body of Christ, continue to grow.

Yours in Christ

Phil