

Seven Things The Church Is Not

05-22-16 AM

What is the church? The word translated in the bible as church (*ekklesia*) just means a gathering of people together. There are many descriptions given in the Bible of the church, comparing it with things in the world. For example, the church is called a family (Eph. 2:19, Gal. 6:10); it is described as a support group (Gal. 6:2, Heb. 10:25); it is compared to a military unit (2 Tim. 2:3, Phm. 2); it is called a (physical human) body (1 Cor. 12:12, Rom. 12:4).

To describe the church we need to understand that it is a very simple composition. It is comprised of the authority of Christ (which is manifested exclusively in the New Testament) and the members / people who have been added to the church by God. We might add to this the purpose and intent of doing the work given to the church. Another way we might understand the church is to understand what it is not. There are seven things we might consider that would give us a better understanding of the church:

1. The church is not a building – 1 Peter 2:4-10

Many people talk about a church building as the church. The building is just a building, no more holy than any other. We are told that the true temple of God are Christians in the church, with Jesus as the foundation.

2. The church is not a denomination – 1 Corinthians 1:10, Ephesians 4:4-6

The Lord's Church is not just one of many churches, nor is it a universal church comprised of churches. It is only one church, with one doctrine, and one means of membership. Diversion from the pattern results in a separate church that lacks the hope of the church of Christ.

3. The church is not a business – John 2:16

Many people run the church like a business. They try to change the church to fit the market of spirituality, so to speak. Yet as Jesus said in the temple, God's house is not an emporium. We only present Christ to the world, and Him crucified. We cannot and do not change the church to fit the desires of men.

4. The church is not a single person or personality – 1 Corinthians 12:12-14

Many people see the church in the identity of the leaders of the church. But the preacher or elders or church leaders are NOT the church. They are members of the church. We need to understand that the church is ours, not "theirs".

5. The church is not a social club – Ephesians 4:11-13

Many people want "holy entertainment" in worship. They talk about the "feeling" of edification. They talk about the "work" of fellowship. Yet none of these things are within the pattern of the church. We ought to remember that Jesus purchased the church (and us as members individually) for His purposes, not ours.

6. The church is not a Sunday – 1 John 1:5-10

Many see the church as a once a week activity. Yet the church relationship continues throughout the week. We are in fellowship with one another even when separate from one another.

7. The church is not a choice- Hebrews 10:19-25

Many think that they can be right with God separate from a church relationship. Yet we should see that our relationship with God is also defined by our relationship with other Christians.

By understanding what the church is not, we can have a better mind to be the church and fulfill the purpose of God, who desired that the church fit its created design from the very beginning. The church is called God's eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:11), confirming the importance of the pattern of the New Testament church.