

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing.

Psalms 100:1-2

Store In My Heart 1Corinthians 4:6

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

This is a good example of learning from the example of others. In watching those with more experience we can learn how to deal with issues that we must face. But Paul's focus is to remind us that we must remain within the boundaries of what has been revealed.

We must always be careful that we do not go beyond what God has revealed. The record of God's revelation to man is our Bible. We cannot add to, or take from, what God has given. The Word is our only link to the Creator. It will take us safely home to the Father, but only if we follow it exactly.

Keep the Word and Keep IN the Word!



Understanding the Difference: Universal and Local Church Bill Robinson

I have a lot of friends that I dearly love and count them as brothers who are going to disagree with this article. Nonetheless, there are others that I dearly love and count as brothers, for whom I feel compelled to write this. We are fast approaching the idea that these things don't matter, and nothing could be further from the truth. They do matter and they are not merely religious traditions and judgments, as some would like to say. They are what sincere and good people believe the New Testament teaches. Every controversial issue in the church comes down to a question of authority. For a thing to be done in the name of Jesus, no matter how good we think the work is, it must first be authorized by Jesus (**Colossians 3:17, Matthew 7:21-23**).

The word "church" as used in the New Testament is merely describing a spiritual relationship. Namely, "the called out." That relationship is either referencing those individuals in a saved relationship to God in the universal church (see **Matthew 16:18**). Or it may be referencing the Christian's relationship to other Christians in a local church (see **Revelation 2 & 3**).

The universal church which Jesus came to establish (**Matthew 16:18**) is composed of individuals, both living and dead, who are in a saved relationship to God through Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 3:14-ff**). It is important to remember the church does not save but it is made up of the saved. Thus, universal church is the aggregate of all saved individuals of all time. And, as such, "...to Him be the glory in the church and in Jesus Christ throughout all generations." (**Ephesians 3:21**)

The local church is the relationship of saints to one another for the purpose of worshipping and working together in a specific locale/city to accomplish the work which God authorized it to do (cf. **1Corinthians 1:1-2, 1&2 Thessalonians 1:1**, etc.). As such each local church is all-sufficient to do the work God has authorized it to do. Namely, to preach the gospel to the lost and for the building up of the saints **Ephesians 4:11-16**; for benevolence in relieving needy saints **Acts 11:27-30**). Each local church

in the New Testament was autonomous (self-governing) and functioned independently from all other local churches (compare the 7 letters to the churches of Asia **Revelation 2 & 3**). Meaning that each local church had their own elders, deacons and members (**Philippians 1:1; Acts 14:23**). This is further emphasized by Peter in **1Peter 5:1-4**, where he exhorts elders “to shepherd the flock that is among you.” Nowhere in the scriptures do we read of an organization larger than the local church. If the local church in Upper West Manhattan were the only church in the whole world it is all-sufficient. Meaning it could be, and it could do everything God wanted it to be and do. It is not dependent on any other church or elders elsewhere to do its work.

The universal church has no earthly organization. In other words, the universal church has no earthly headquarters. Christ is the head of His body, the church and is the chief shepherd over the universal church (**Ephesians 1:22-23; 1Peter 5:4**). The universal church is a spiritual gathering and coming together of the saved who are in enrolled in heaven (see **Hebrews 12:22-24**).

The New Testament never speaks of local churches cooperating except concurrently. That is because they are independent and autonomous. To cooperate concurrently means each local church is aiming toward the same goal but independent of each other. There is no organization in the New Testament larger or smaller than the local church. Thus, the New Testament knows nothing of any man-made institution or arrangement for doing the work which God gave to the local church to do. That is why I noted earlier, if the Upper West Manhattan church was the only church in all of the world it could be and it could do everything God wanted it to be and do. Now that is either a true or false statement. If false, then where is the scripture that proves otherwise. If true, then no human institution or centralized arrangement is necessary for doing the work God intended the local church to do.

Why does it matter about the universal and local church? As one writer has wisely observed, “...to accurately determine the work of the church we must keep a consistent and unambiguous definition of the church (universal or local) before us. If people are confused as to what constitutes a local church (or universal church - BR), we can expect nothing but confusion when they try to determine the work of a local church.” (Robert Turner, p. 8, The Cogdell-Turner Discussion).

Contact Us

We like opportunities to speak with others about the Lord.

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The
CHURCH OF CHRIST

MEETS HERE



10:20 AM • Sunday Worship Service
5:00 PM • Sunday Night Bible Study
7:00 PM • Wednesday Bible Study

For Our Information

Jim Soliday is still dealing with a fib and will see a cardiologist that specializes in electrical issues early next month.

Malcolm Rigsby is doing better but still has headaches and dizzy spells.

Shannon Soliday is doing well and is cleared to drive again.

Ruben Keisler has a follow-up this week regarding his procedure last Wednesday.

Bill Venable is visiting his daughter Tina for a couple of weeks.

Sunday Evening – **Zechariah 6** Wednesday – **John 11:45**

Question sheets are available to help with these studies.