

Facts About The Church

Part Four

Acts 14:23; 20:28

Introduction:

1. The word “church” comes from the Greek word *ecclesia* (ἐκκλησία) which means, “those who are called out of” or “those who are summoned.”
2. A good way to learn the meaning of a biblical word or concept is to observe how it is used throughout Scripture.
3. The word “church” is first used in Matthew 16:18-19.
 - a. The Church is built by (and belongs to) Christ.
 - b. The Church is built upon Christ.
 - c. The Church will overcome death.
 - d. The Church is the Kingdom of Christ.
 - e. The Church is guided by the doctrine of Christ.
4. The second use of the word “church” is in Matthew 18:17.
 - a. The Church is a congregation of people.
 - b. The Church is ordained to teach.
 - c. The Church is designed to discipline.
5. The third use of the word “church” is in Acts 2:47.
 - a. The Church is maintained by the Lord.
 - b. The Church is comprised of the saved.
 - c. The Church is faithful in obedience.
 - d. The Church is filled with unity.
6. The other uses of the word “church” reinforce and illustrate these previous teachings.
7. However, there are three more uses of this word that must be considered.
 - I. The Church Is Locally Autonomous (Acts 14:23)
 - A. “...*Ordained them elders in every church...*”
 - B. Each congregation was overseen by its own elders.
 1. The fact that elders were appointed in every church indicates that each church was overseen by its own eldership.
 2. Paul states that this is part of the order of the church (Titus 1:5).
 3. Thus, a biblically organized church will be overseen by elders.
 - a. A church may be scripturally unorganized.
 - b. A church may be unscripturally unorganized.
 - c. A church may be unscripturally organized.
 - d. A church may be scripturally organized.
 4. The emphasis here is that each church possesses local autonomy – *it is not dependent upon or answerable to any other church or eldership for its work.*

- C. Some important implications of this teaching are...
 - 1. The eldership of one congregation may not rule another church.
 - 2. There is no higher organization of the church than the local.

- II. The Church Is Overseen by Elders (Acts 20:28)
 - A. "...*The Holy Ghost hath made you overseers...*"
 - B. That Paul is speaking to elders of the church is seen in verse 17.
 - C. In their role as elders, these men first were to take heed to themselves.
 - D. They also had the responsibility to attend to the church (flock).
 - E. They were divinely appointed overseers (*bishops* – the Greek word is *episcopous*).
 - 1. They are called elders in 20:17.
 - 2. Their role as overseers is to watch over the flock.
 - a. By attending to them ("*take heed*").
 - b. By shepherding them ("*to feed*" = "to shepherd").
 - c. By protecting them (vs. 29).
 - 3. The flock they guard is the church of God.
 - F. Some important implications of this teaching are...
 - 1. The church is not overseen by a pastor.
 - 2. The church must submit to the authority of the eldership.

- III. The Church Upholds the Truth (1 Timothy 3:15)
 - A. "...*The pillar and ground of the truth.*"
 - B. The church is the house (or household) of God.
 - C. Thus, its function is to uphold and support the truth.
 - 1. The pillar is that which upholds.
 - 2. The ground is the support that helps to stabilize.
 - 3. Thus, the church must uphold and support God's Word.
 - a. By her example (Phil. 2:15-16; Matt. 5:16).
 - b. By her stand (Jude 1:3; Gal. 1:10; 4:16).
 - c. By her teaching (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:4).
 - D. Some important implications of this teaching are...
 - 1. The church must be governed by the doctrine of Christ.
 - 2. The church must not compromise the doctrine of Christ.
 - 3. The church must evangelize with the doctrine of Christ.

Conclusion: *Don't you want to be a part of the church described in the Bible?
Aren't you blessed to know about the church that Jesus built?*