

Warnings Of The Apostasy Sunday PM 08/05/18

Introduction:

We want to continue our study of the "church" in this lesson.

The word church used 74 times in the New Testament.

Four times it is used not referring to the Lord's body but an assembly of people. *Acts 7.38* the church or congregation in the wilderness. *Acts 19.32, 93, 41* it is translated assembly in these verses.

Church is used referring to the "universal church" in passages such as *Matthew 16*; the local assembly in *1 Corinthians 11.18*; and the local congregation in *1 Corinthians 1.2*.

The word "churches" used 36 times in the New Testament. Therefore, we have a total of 110 times where the church is referred to. In every case it is used referring to local congregations.

I) The Church In The Beginning

A) Jesus prayed for unity among His followers, *John 17.20-21*

1. Based upon being in the body of Christ. *1 Corinthians 12.12-13*
2. That was based upon respecting Jesus' authority and His word, unity in doctrine, *Acts 2.42*
 - a. They were to preach the Gospel of Christ, *1 Peter 4.11*
 - b. This unity is seen in them being "Christians" and nothing more or less, *Acts 11.26*.

B) The Local congregation is the largest organization in the Bible

1. Christians in a specific locality were to assemble together to worship and serve God.
2. Each congregation was autonomous or independent of each other. They were all to remain in the doctrine of Christ; they worshipped and served God but no one congregation dictated policy or doctrine to another congregation.
 - a. Ex. Jerusalem did not oversee any other congregation in the Book of Acts.
 - b. Ex. Antioch was not the sponsoring church; Paul left Antioch and preached the Gospel of Christ.

C) Characteristics of the local congregation

1. Local government, *Acts 14.23*.
 - a. The elders at Philippi were to oversee the flock at Philippi, *Phil. 1.1*
 - b. Decisions were to be made at the congregational level, *1 Corinthians 16.3-5*
2. Local treasury, *Phil. 4.15-16; 1 Corinthians 16.1-2*
3. Local discipline, *1 Corinthians 5.1-13*.
4. A group that works together
 - a. They assembled, *Acts 20.7*
 - b. Each Christian or member participates, *Acts 2.42*

II) First Century Issues

A) During the time of the Apostles issues were addressed by them

1. Doctrinal problems -
 - a. Issues related to the Law of Moses - circumcision, observance of Sabbath Day, dietary laws, etc.
 - b. Issues related to idolatry - eating of meats sacrificed to idols, going to the temple of an idol,
 - c. Issues related to the deity of Christ
2. Problems in attitude - Diotrephes
3. Church discipline

B) Warnings expressed

1. Jesus, *Matthew 7.13-20*
2. Peter, *2 Peter 2.1-3*
3. Jude *4, 16-19*
4. John, *1 John 2.18-19; 4.1, 5-6*
5. Paul
 - a. *Acts 20.29-30* - Savage wolves
 - b. *2 Corinthians 11.12-14* Satan will transform himself into a minister of light
 - c. *Romans 16.17-18* false teachers
 - d. *2 Thess. 2.3-12* the son of perdition

- e. *1 Timothy 4.1-3* false doctrines
- f. *2 Timothy 2.16-18* false doctrine will spread like cancer, it will overthrow the faith of some.
- g. *2 Timothy 4.2-4* they will turn aside to fables.

III) **Departure From the Organization**

A) **New Testament elders**

1. Must be qualified, *1 Timothy 3.1ff; Titus 1.*
2. Were to oversee the local congregation, *1 Peter 5.2*
3. There was always a plurality; they were limited by the doctrine of Christ, were limited to the local congregation.
 - a. Elders were not regional elders
 - b. Elders were not legislators but overseers

B) **Organizational Changes**

1. One elder started to be seen as the chief or head elder. There became a distinction between these head elders; county elders and city elders. Eventually he became the County Bishop or City Bishop.
2. Elders started to get together and have meetings.
 - a. At first the elders would talk about various issues and come to some decision and then go back to their congregations. It was up to the congregation what they would do.

- b. After a time they started to say that since the Apostles were gone they were in line to make decisions for the church. The local congregations were bound by their decisions.
3. They had effectively changed the organization of the church. In the 2nd Century five Bishops came to have preeminence -- Antioch, Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Constantinople.

C) Changes in Doctrine

1. Gnosticism
2. 2nd to 4th Century - Holy water, penance for sins, Latin Mass, Images of Saints and Martyrs, Extreme Unction, purgatory, instrumental music, celibacy of the priesthood, indulgences, confession of sins to the priest, sprinkling for baptism, veneration of saints, etc.

Conclusion:

The various warnings given in the Bible were for a purpose. Once the Apostles were gone the Christians would face challenges and temptations. Some start to teach false doctrine and others would see the church as a means of power and wealth. But some held true to the Word of God. If we do so today we will also be members of Christ's church.