

The Nature of the Church

JUSTIN KUEK, AUCKLAND, SEPTEMBER 2007

Introduction

In my article on Church Planting and the Great Commission, I argued that despite conventional wisdom, the best way to finish the Great Commission is NOT the planting of Churches – but rather OBEYING exactly what Jesus commanded for us, the church, to do. However, this raised several very important questions, not the least being, “Can it really be that easy?” Everything in our church experience screams that it is not. This is where we will continue our study.

Let us begin by restating the commission. It is to:

- 1) GO, and,
- 2) Make Disciples,
- 3) of All Nations,
- 4) Baptising them, and
- 5) Teaching them to Obey all that Jesus commanded

The key question here is, “Where does the local church fit into the Great Commission?” If Christians need the local church, then shouldn’t it be clear that the Great Commission would require the PLANTING of churches? Well, despite the obvious logic, the answer depends on what our view of the church is.

What is the church?

Firstly, to lessen the risk of offense, please let me clarify that I believe in the Church! I believe that the New Testament has a lot to say about the church and that “churches” are the result of the Great Commission! This seems very paradoxical. How can one say that Church Planting is NOT necessary for the completion of the Great Commission; and at the same time say “I believe in the church”? Herein lies the problem. It is one of definition and sequence¹. What exactly IS the church? If we are honest, most of us have never really studied what the Church is. Our idea of the church is mostly imbibed through our Christian life and ministry and interactions with the local church(es) we attend, or have attended. Even in the event that we have studied the church, it would almost certainly be from the current worldview of church and ministry! This can be problematic, because if the fundamental assumption(s) of Church is unbiblical, then everything else that is based on that assumption would also thus become tainted. It is not helpful to say we will talk about the church and at the same time refuse to have our assumptions on the church challenged.

Since most would insist on the planting of churches in order to fully obey the Great commission, we will need to define what is meant by the word “Church”. It is a word that most Christians take for granted and assume that everyone has the same understanding of its meaning.

The word “church” was not found in every one of the early translations of the English bible. Wycliffe used it in his handwritten translation of the Latin Vulgate (c 1395), while Tyndale used “congregation” in his (1534). The Geneva Bible (1599), however, used “church”.

The translators of the King James Bible (1611) were given 15 rules which they were to follow. The most significant in the case of our article was rule 3, which stated “The Old Ecclesiastical Words to be kept, viz. the Word Church not to be translated Congregation & congregation.” (see <http://www.av1611.org/kjv/kjvhist.html>). This shows the bias of the translation – it was more important to fit the new translation into church traditions rather than be true to what the bible actually says! Young in his Literal Translation (1862) used the word “Assembly”.

The English word “Church” has Anglo-Saxon roots, and was the name employed in the Teutonic (Germanic) languages to give meaning to the Greek “*Ekklesia*”. The Catholic Encyclopaedia states, “The derivation of the word “Church” has been much debated. It is now agreed that it is derived from the Greek “*kyriakon*”, meaning “the Lord’s house” a term which from the third century was used to signify a Christian place of worship. This, though the less usual expression, had apparently obtained currency among the Teutonic races. The Northern tribes had been accustomed to pillage the Christian churches of the empire, long before their own conversion. Hence, even prior to the arrival of the Saxons in Britain, their language had acquired words to designate the externals of the Christian religion.”ⁱⁱ

It must be stressed that by the time the word Church found its way into the English Bible(s), it had picked up its own meaning – not necessarily in line with the original Greek word “*Ekklesia*” which it was supposed to represent. The meaning of the word Church as used in the English language today is based on that history. Thus, Webster defines our English word “Church” as:

1. a building for public and especially Christian worship
2. the clergy or officialdom of a religious body
3. a body or organisation of religious believers; as a) the whole body of Christians; b) Denomination (eg. The Presbyterian church); c) Congregation
4. a public divine worship (eg. go to church every Sunday)
5. the clerical profession (eg. Considered the church a possible career)ⁱⁱⁱ

The definitions given above are accurate from a historical and linguistic point of view. However, most protestants, especially evangelicals, would have a problem with at least some of the meanings of the word “Church” given above. They would say, “Of course the church is NOT a Building!” But herein lies the complexity! We all seem to assume that everyone is on the same page when we use the word “Church”. The reality is that there is a wide spectrum of meanings, and these are coloured by linguistic, religious and biblical traditions that we are from.

If the word “CHURCH” has so many meanings that even Christians can’t agree, what are we to do? We can try to change the meaning of the word “CHURCH” or find another more biblical word to express that which Jesus is building – His body. Because of the tremendous momentum and the well accepted use of the word “CHURCH” in Christendom, it would be extremely difficult to try to introduce a new, but more accurate word for the church of God. I feel that it would be easier to attempt to re-define the word “CHURCH” from a BIBLICAL perspective. So, let’s try to redefine the traditional meaning of the original word “CHURCH”. We would have to acknowledge that the use of

the original word church was a poor fit in the first place. We are effectively saying then that the LINGUISTIC (and original) meaning of the word church is un-biblical (e.g. the biblical word for church never refers to a building). We would need to go back to the original Greek word, "*Ekklesia*", after all, this is the word that has been translated "Church" in our English bibles. Through this process of elimination and deduction we could then come to a biblical meaning of the word "CHURCH". Because the word "CHURCH" is still widely used by believers of all shapes and sizes as well as non-believers, it means that whenever we now use the word "CHURCH" we would have to state which context or meaning we are using the word in! It is messy – but then, it is very difficult to change nearly 2000 years of historic usage of any word.

We see that the process of redefining the word "CHURCH" is not as straight forward as we think. Ironically, it is the simplicity of the word "*Ekklesia*" that complicates the process! "*Ekklesia*" was a secular word with a very simple meaning – a **group of people who were called out for a purpose**. BUT, **Who** are this group who are called? **What** do they belong to, and **How** do they belong? Even the purpose of the calling is often unclear! As an example of this problem, the riot (made up of non-believers) in Ephesus was also called an "*Ekklesia*"!^{iv} None of us would consider that this "*Ekkelesia*" refers to a church! Because the meaning of "*Ekklesia*" is rather general, we are apt to add our own meanings to the word! This is where I feel we have allowed our own experiences and the existing prevalent church culture to define what church is. As I have talked with Church leaders from different Christian traditions, I have come to realise that most have a very definite idea of what they think "church" means, but almost to a man, have never put their understanding of what the church is to the test of Scripture and early New Testament practice.

Comparisons

Therefore, what I would like to do is to take you through a simple exercise. Let's first of all define the local church as the huge majority of Christians would. Most Christians would hold to the prevalent view of the dichotomy of the Church – **Universal** and **Local**. The Universal Church is the whole body of Christ. It is Universal, meaning that it includes all who have professed Christ – alive and dead. Then there is the Local Church which for most is the tangible part of the body of Christ. It is interesting that when it comes to the Church of God, the Local Church is where almost all of the attention lies. This being the case, this view is what we will use in most of our discussion.

The traditional Local Church is an entity that is tangible, and defined by a commitment of Christians to belong. While there are other attributes to the local church we will limit our definition to those that make a particular local church unique amongst other local churches. I simply want to compare what we define as the local church against New Testament experience and theology.

This is what we can observe with our local churches:

1. They have a clear-cut membership – we choose where we belong
2. They have clear-cut distinctions – differences based upon theology, vision, co-operation, leadership, physical area, etc (if this was not so, then why don't we just amalgamate all our local churches?)
3. Each local church has its own entity – legal, financial, organisational etc.
4. May be grouped into denominations, with each denomination being distinct

5. Have their own leadership, ministries, activities, and cultural practices

How does this compare to the church in the New Testament? How does the New Testament view the church? If churches are indeed distinct entities, how does the New Testament define these entities? This can be observed in the letters to the churches in the Epistles and the Book of Revelation.

1. **One Church in One City.** When Paul wrote to the churches (for example, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome) he wrote to only ONE church in each of these cities. The book of Revelation lists 7 messages to 7 Churches in 7 Cities.
2. **One Church in one Area.** The book of Galatians was written to the church^v in the region of Galatia. This was over a wide geographical area – and even in this case, there was only one church. There was also one church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria.^{vi}
3. **One church in a home!** Paul wrote to the church in “so-and-so’s” house^{vii}

If we try to fit what we view as the local church into the above, we will soon have major problems. Because the New Testament recognises only one church in a City or Area, our view of each local church as a complete entity is **too small!** We would consider that in our area or city (or town/village) there would be MANY churches, YET, the bible sees only ONE church! That is a simple enough argument. However, here is where it gets a little tricky. Given the preceding argument, we can concur that our view of the local church is too small. However, at the very same time that Paul writes to ONE church in a City or Area, he also writes to ONE church in a House! Therefore, while our view of the church is too SMALL, at the very same time, it is also too BIG! How can this be? It seems to be an oxymoron! The key to overcoming this is problem is the recognition that our understanding of the local church needs to be adjusted to fit that of the Bible! When there is such a clash as this, we can be sure that our definitions are incomplete to say the least.

The Church UNIVERSAL and LOCAL

So where did this dichotomy come from? I suspect that much of our church understanding and structure is simply a result of church history (i.e. the church just evolved into what we are today, through the process of living in history). Within the first hundred years of the church, we saw some significant changes. Church thinking began to shift from a **Jewish** mindset to a **Greek** one. The church thus began to shift from a practical, obedience-centred, relationship-based Christianity, to one which was far more intellectual and organisational. Instead of a freewheeling, dynamic church that was intent on changing the world, it started to develop a “fortress mentality” intent on keeping itself doctrinally pure. A prime example of this is the fact that you cannot find the word “LOVE” in the Apostle’s creed, despite the fact that it was meant to be the central plank of Christianity! So, by about 100 AD, the church was well on its way to growing cold (is it any surprise that the book of Revelation was written around 96AD, and most of the 7 churches had major problems?). By the time Constantine came around in 312 AD, the church was ripe for the wholesale corruption that was progressively introduced through his conversion to Christianity!^{viii} Thus, as the church lost its light, the world slid into the Dark Ages. The church was in dire straits and something needed to be done! In this darkness, a dim light started to shine in the form of Martin Luther who led the Great Reformation.

However, even the Reformation (which most Protestants see as the highlight in church history) never dealt with the fundamentally critical issues of the world view of the church. In fact very little was changed through the reformation. Great as the doctrine of salvation by faith is, it was only one of the many things that needed to change in the church. The Lutherans continued with no separation of Church and state (even today, the German government pays the salaries of all Lutheran pastors!), they continued to baptise babies, and did not tolerate those who would try to further the Reformation – in fact they would kill those who opposed their church doctrine!

So while the Reformation caused the church to split and restored the doctrine of Salvation by faith, it left much of the church basically unchanged! Thus the corruption of the church through Constantine was really never dealt with. As Protestants (or at least with protestant roots), our churches have simply evolved from this history. Therefore it would be fair to conclude that much of our local church structure is actually a product of church history rather than the product of a deliberate attempt to find an understanding that is true to scripture. That is a very sobering thought!

Even if we look at our attempts at trying to find a scriptural basis of the dichotomy of the Universal and Local church, we will find many problems. The word “*Ekklesia*” is used 114 times in the New Testament. In 110 cases, it is used in the context of the church (it is used 4 times as a secular word). Bible scholars say that in 96 cases, it refers to the church in a local context. “There you have it!” you say. “That is the LOCAL church!” BUT is it? Remember, if we already have an existing picture of what constitutes a local church, any reading of the scripture relating to the church will naturally be from the basis of that picture. Therefore the scriptures presented as arguments for the local church will of course reinforce the current situation! However, good bible study must be balanced and address all issues, especially the thorny ones.

Problems with the “Local Church” view

The view that the church is a dichotomy of the Universal and Local is problematic for several reasons:

1. ***It does not fit in with the New Testament view of ONE Church per city or area.*** As far as the New Testament is concerned there is only one church. The Apostles wrote to ONE church in a city or area. It can reasonably be assumed then that Christians were also expected to see the church as one.
2. ***It is far bigger than the view that a household can be the church.*** Paul considered many households the church. Notice I did not use the words “Churches”. He used the words, “the Church” in so-and-so’s house. Modern day bible translators who have a local church view of the church render these verses, “the church that **MEETS** in so-and-so’s house” – that is a mistranslation.
3. ***It is a model that is actually too simplistic (a dichotomy – one or the other).*** Where do denominations fit in? What about para-church organisations? What would happen to a Christian who does not belong to a local church? Is he/she still a part of the church? If not, what is he/she? If so, why do we need the “local church”?
4. ***It splits the body of Christ.*** Far from being a single united body as Jesus prayed for, this view of the church actually creates division. We saw this in Borneo where we were working. Most Church Planters insisted on starting their own “brand” of the church, even in small

communities of 100 to 150 people where there were already existing evangelical works! This not only divided families and the community, it caused confusion amongst the unbelievers as well. In Kenya where we recently conducted a seminar, we were in a village of a few hundred people, and there were six churches there – none of them on “speaking terms” with each other! The west is not spared either. In many small towns we see 5 or 6 churches, all trying to reach out to the “lost” but not being able to work as one!

5. ***It ultimately has a bias towards an inward view.*** Local churches tend to exist to serve the needs of their members, rather than to be the answer to a lost world.

The case for the “Local church” view

One can point to many instances within the New Testament where there are organisational structures set up in the early church. After all, deacons were appointed^{ix} and Paul listed the “qualifications” for Elders and Deacons for Timothy^x, and instructed Titus to select and appoint Elders^{xi}. The Hebrew Christians were encouraged not to forsake assembling for the purpose of encouraging one another^{xii}. The Corinthians were told to put aside a special collection each week as they met^{xiii}. With so many scriptures like these, is it not clear what the Local Church should be? Aren’t examples like these enough to validate the traditional view of the local church? This is where we need to be very careful in our thinking/discussion. We need to go back to look what Jesus ***actually commanded***, rather than what His followers ***ended up doing!***

Prescribed versus Observed

We can easily make the mistake of making what is **OBSERVED**, the **PRESCRIBED** scriptural standard. This is especially true when we try to define what the church is. It is extremely interesting that Jesus did not prescribe a structure for the church. However, we see structures springing up later as the early church put into practice the principles of the kingdom. What we need to ask though is, “Are these structures scripturally **PRESCRIBED**, or are they simply the **EXPRESSION** of the church in a particular area?” This question is significant, because if we are looking for structures, we can easily make the mistake of copying structures that are culturally or historically inappropriate for our circumstances.

There are quite a few examples of these scattered throughout the bible. We will look at three – the King, the Priest and the Temple.

1. ***The King.*** Israel was supposed to be a people who were God’s very own, chosen not because they were special in themselves, but because it was through them that God would declare His intentions and provide salvation to mankind. Israel was supposed to show the world what it was like to live under God’s rule. The world would then be able to “follow” Israel’s example. However, instead of being trendsetters, we see that they wanted to become like every other nation – they wanted a human King. God was not pleased with this^{xiv}. One could therefore not make the case that because Israel had a King, and that God blessed many of their Kings (and the nation of Israel while they had those Kings), that this was the pattern/plan of God all along. We would be very mistaken in drawing that conclusion, but yet, it would be the most natural thing to do if we had no appreciation of the bigger picture!

2. **The Priest.** One of the central elements of Old Testament worship was the priesthood. These were a special people (the Tribe of Levi) who were chosen to represent the people to God and vice versa. Again, it would be a mistake to say that because there were priests in the bible, that this should be our pattern. We need to realise that under the New Covenant (the New Testament dispensation) we have a new High Priest (Jesus) and a new Priesthood (all believers). Any distinction between the Clergy and Laity is not the pattern/plan of God for the New Testament. One may object – saying, “What about the ascension gifts?” Yes, these are to operate in the New Covenant, but note, they are “gifts of people” to the church – not positions in the church, and they are very different from Old Testament priests. Under the New Covenant, we can no longer talk about special people who have been “called into the Ministry” because we are ALL called into ministry. There is to be no distinction of those called into “Full-Time” work and the rest of the church. We are all the “*Ekklesia*” – the called out ones!
3. **The Temple.** When we look at all the power and glory that was revealed at the temple of Solomon, we can easily forget that the Temple was never God’s idea – it was David’s! In fact the bible is quite clear in the “conversation” God had with David through Nathan^{xv}. God asked if He had ever requested for a house to be built, giving the implication that nothing made by man’s hands can ever hope to contain His glory! And yet, while this was not God’s plan, He was able to work with it, showing His glory in and through it. We would be mistaken to think that because God’s glory was seen in it, therefore, it was God’s pattern/plan in the first place! Doing so, would cause one to look for a building equivalent to the OT temple in the church today. However, God did ask Israel to build a Tabernacle, a movable structure which was not taken by Israel on its sojourning, but rather LED Israel where God wanted her to go. It showed that the presence of God would be central to the nation (Israel camped around the Tabernacle) and the presence would direct the nation. Israel moved when the presence (expressed in the pillar of Cloud and Fire) moved! In the New Testament, we see that God’s intention is still that His Tabernacle would dwell with men!^{xvi} The Temple model in the Old Testament – although not being God’s intention, is replaced by the New Testament Temple, but we are told that this is a building **NOT** made with human hands (see the book of Hebrews) but are those who are the called of God – the *Ekklesia* – the Church! Therefore, we need to change our paradigm from one of **GOING TO** church to a paradigm of **BEING THE** church! We, the disciples of Christ **ARE** the Temple of God!^{xvii}

Making Sense of it All

What is **OBSERVED** makes it very difficult to work out that which is **PRESCRIBED**. We need to separate what was **DONE** from what was actually **COMMANDED**. The early disciples and church fathers were not perfect, and we cannot just blindly follow their ACTIONS. What we need to do is to study their responses in the light of what God required of them. Take for example the Great Commission. Jesus commanded the disciples to “Go into all the world”. Power was endued on them for this very purpose. BUT did they go? No! They stayed! In fact, it took a great persecution for the early Church to be scattered (Acts 8:1), but even then, if we look carefully, it was the disciples who were scattered – the Apostles stayed in Jerusalem! It was not till much later that church historians tell us that the Apostles finally went. Should this be our pattern? Hardly!

As another example, we see that the Apostles were in a quandary when they tried to select a replacement for Judas. They wanted to know God's will in the matter, so what did they do? As all good Christians would (NOT!), they cast lots to find out God's will! Should THIS be our pattern? Again – Hardly!

So, what have we learnt thus far? From our discussion, we can make the following conclusions about our current situation:

1. Our church model is not exclusive and is hardly the most biblical
2. "Church" needs to be re-defined
3. We must make a distinction between what is OBSERVED and that which is PRESCRIBED
4. We must return to the scriptures in order to properly carry out points 2 and 3 above

The process of coming up with a proper picture of the church can be rather daunting! Where do we start? How can we make sure that we do not miss any of the significant issues? Please allow me to suggest a three point framework that I think is very helpful. We need to:

1. **Return to God's original purpose for the Church.** For too long we have tended to look at church and ministry without the context of God's original purpose. Therefore we have been able to conveniently say that the local church can never be expected to be tasked with the work of missions. The local church has too many demands on it to look after its own. The task has therefore been left to Missions Organisations to complete (note that Missions Organisations DO NOT fit into the Universal Church – Local Church model). This is hardly biblical, and we must face up to this great anomaly! God's purpose is that "the gospel of the Kingdom be preached in all the world as a witness to every nation (ethnic group in the original) and then the end shall come!"^{xviii} Is it possible to have a church that can ensure that God's purpose is paramount? The answer is a resounding YES, and we should all seek to ensure that this happens!
2. **Rightly divide the Old Testament and the New.** The book of Hebrews is simply amazing. It argues to the Jew, that they now have a NEW and BETTER covenant. That we now have a new sacrifice (Jesus' substitutionary death), a new high priest (Jesus), a new priesthood (all believers), a new sacrifice (ourselves), a new law (the Spirit), a new temple (the church – all believers) and so on. How can we ever still return to the Old Testament? Yet, this, unfortunately is where we find the majority of the church still mired under. Most of our churches are based on this model – on a "Holy Day", we go to a "Holy Place", to be ministered to by a "Holy Man" (or woman). This is hardly a New Testament model! Jesus wants His church to live in the New Covenant that He purchased for us with His blood.
3. **Find out the Bottom lines for the church.** What is it that makes the church the church, without which it would not BE the church? There has been much discussion on this. Many are struggling to discover a new way of DOING church. However, I would like to draw our attention to the fact that Jesus never prescribed a structure for us, His church to follow. Therefore we should be extremely careful that we do not push what appears to work in our situation and in our time in history as the structure to follow. While there are no structural imperatives, we do find that there are many new perspectives and values that should be present in any church situation.

Therefore, as we seek to work out a biblical definition of the church, we need to constantly be aware of this framework. We can do so by asking, 1) ***What is God's original Purpose?***; 2) ***Is this OLD or NEW Testament?*** (what is the NT application here?); and 3) ***What are the Paradigms and Values that we are to have in the church?***

In summary, here are some truths that we can deduce from the scriptures discussed thus far:

1. Jesus is Building His church
2. There is only ONE church
3. The Church started when Jesus rose from the dead
4. We are commanded to Make Disciples
5. Jesus never prescribed a set structure for the church

Working with Fresh Eyes

The five points raised above can be very difficult ones, because when they are taken as a whole, they are diametrically opposed to a traditional local church paradigm. I challenge you to think through these very opposite ways of viewing the church and see which one is more faithful to the scriptures.

I have always had a niggling problem with the “Local Church” approach to the work of the kingdom. Early in our missions work we came across this in our denomination. In a conversation with our superintendent, he casually referred to a group of Christians as a “Preaching Point” and actually said that they were not a “Church”. Right then I felt odd and objected! That was 25 years ago. The question still remains. When does a group of Christians become a church? In another denomination we were later involved with, the threshold was 75.

So what can be considered a church in the “Local Church” approach? Was the group in the book of Acts “a church” before they had Deacons? Were the groups that Paul asked Timothy and Titus to select Elders “a church” before they had elders? If a group of Christians are not considered a church, what then are they? And does it not seem that our definitions of what constitutes a church are rather unnatural and arbitrary? This then also raises another very important question – “Do we really need to organise Christians into churches?”

Let us return to the five implications I listed in previous section (I had mentioned the word SEQUENCE much earlier in the article, but did not expand on it. This is where SEQUENCE will feature). What are some implications of these truths? Below is a list I we need to seriously think about:

1. There is only ONE church and that was started when Jesus rose from the dead. This means that we actually cannot start churches! If that is so, then what should we be doing?
2. We should make Disciples. Jesus said, “I will build My Church.” However, He never commanded us to start churches! This is because the church is built by Jesus, and has already been started. Rather His command to us is to MAKE disciples. By doing so, we return to God’s original Purpose!
3. As disciples live out their lives following Jesus, they are the EXPRESSION of the church in their local area. Therefore it is more correct to say “the Local EXPRESSION of the Church” rather than the “Local Church”. This EXPRESSION can be organised, as we see in the New

Testament (e.g. the appointing of Deacons, and later Elders), but we must be very careful in our organisation of the EXPRESSION.

4. That EXPRESSION must be subject to the INTENTION. At no time should our organisation cut across God's original intention. This makes simple sense. If it is Jesus' church, then we must be faithful to His wishes/will.
5. We must allow the structures to develop on their own rather than insist on the existence of set pre-prescribed structures. With the Church Planting model, when you duplicate the structure, you would have planted a new church. With Jesus' model, HE is building the church. Our task is to make disciples. These disciples ARE the church, and as they live out their lives, different structures MAY develop, at different rates and to different degrees. These structures, however, are still to be subject to God's original INTENTION (point 4 above).

Bearing Fruit by Itself

What I have just described has been one of the most liberating revelations in our work so far. We had become so busy doing all we could to start churches! Along with the church planting, we also had to do all the corresponding work that goes with it – fund raising to support church planters, running bible schools to train further church planters, raising funds for church buildings and so on. As the work grew, so did the demands for our time to ensure that the growth would continue. It was easy to see that the work was fast becoming a burden rather than something that was “easy and light!”

What a contrast to realise that our responsibility is in fact a lot smaller than we had imagined! **MAKE DISCIPLES**, and the Church will grow! One of the reasons for our confidence that the church will build itself is Jesus parable of the man who scattered seed (Mark 4:26-29). Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is like that. The man scatters the seed, and regardless of what the man does after that (whether he sleeps or is awake), the seed sprouts and grows, and **ALL BY ITSELF**, the soil produces grain! WOW! Dare we believe that it can be that simple? I am stupid enough to! God says it, and that should settle it!

For Further Discussion

I realise that there are MANY other questions that have arisen and will arise from this short article. I hope to cover some of these in later issues/articles:

1. Discipleship – what is discipleship and why is it so important? How well do we do it in our churches today?
2. Principles and Values of the Kingdom – What are the principles and values of God's Kingdom and how do our current approaches compare?
3. Being the Church – A Different Paradigm!
4. The Nature of Jesus' ministry

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- ⁱ Do we plant churches to complete the Great Commission, OR does obeying the Great Commission lead to “churches” naturally starting?
- ⁱⁱ From the Catholic Encyclopaedia on CD
- ⁱⁱⁱ From the Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary of the English language
- ^{iv} Acts 19:23-32
- ^v Various translations use the word “churches” to translate “*Ekklesia*” which is translated in the singular in the other verses that I have quoted.
- ^{vi} Acts 9:31
- ^{vii} Pricillia & Aquilia Rom 16:3-5; 1 Cor 16:19; Nymphas Col 4:15;
- ^{viii} We are not debating the “genuine-ness” of Constantine’s conversion, but to simply point out that the inclusion of the church into the Roman Empire where there was no separation of church and state led to the corruption of the church. How on earth did the Great Commission go from one of a Gospel of Peace to the Crusades where unbelievers are massacred?
- ^{ix} Acts 6:1-6
- ^x 1 Tim 3:1-12
- ^{xi} Titus 1:5 (but notice he was to appoint Elders in every TOWN – not church!!)
- ^{xii} Heb 10:24,25 (Note: the reason for assembling is to encourage ONE ANOTHER, not to attend a service!)
- ^{xiii} 1 Cor 16:1,2
- ^{xiv} 1 Sam 8:1-6
- ^{xv} 2 Sam 7:1-7
- ^{xvi} Rev 21:3
- ^{xvii} 1 Cor 3:16
- ^{xviii} Matt 24:14