

The Church

Lesson 2
Nature of The Universal Church

The Church

1. What Is The Church?
2. Nature of The Universal Church
3. Organization and Work of The Universal Church
4. The Only Source of Divine Authority Today
5. Establishing Divine Authority

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The Church

6. Nature of A Local Church
7. Organization and Work of A Local Church
8. Independence Autonomy and Cooperation of Local Churches
9. Institutionalism and The Social Gospel

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What Is The Church?

1. Jesus promised to build His one church
2. What does church mean?
3. How is church used in the New Testament?
4. Some figures that describe the church
5. Rejecting misconceptions about the church

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Introduction

- As we studied previously Jesus' church refers to the assembly of people that He saves
- When we think of His church, we must think people instead of anything else like institution or building
- The majority of times Jesus' church is mentioned in the New Testament it refers to either the universal church or a local church

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Introduction

- It is critical that we understand the nature of His universal church so we do not pervert its organization and work
- Sadly, we see so many examples of believing and practicing errors that modify the organization and work of Jesus' universal church even among our brethren

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What Is The Universal Church?

- The universal church is the assembly of people in the world that Jesus saves both living and dead
- Therefore, the universal church is composed of all individuals in the world that Jesus saves
- When we study its nature, it differs in various ways from a local church, an assembly of Christians who agree to worship and work together in a specific location

7

Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

- We cannot voluntarily join Jesus' church
- But, we can choose to obey the gospel to be saved, forgiven of our sins
- We are saved by Jesus when we believe in Him enough to repent (change our minds) about our sins, confess Him as the Son of God and be baptized (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of our sins

8

Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

- Each and every person that He saves, He adds together in His one church, His body
- We can only be saved by Jesus in one way
- We are not saved by infant baptism, direct operation of the Holy Spirit on our minds or by the sinner's prayer

9

Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

Act 2:22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--

Act 2:23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

10

Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

Act 2:24 "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Act 2:29 "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

11

Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

Act 2:30 "And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, Act 2:31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.

12

Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

Act 2:32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

Act 2:33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

13

Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

Act 2:34 "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

Act 2:35 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.'"

14

Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

Act 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified."

Act 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

15

Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

Act 2:38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Act 2:39 "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

16

Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

Act 2:40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

Act 2:41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

17

Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

Act 2:42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Act 2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

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Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

NKJV

Act 2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

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Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

Act 8:37 [*And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."*]

Act 8:38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

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Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

Gal 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

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Enter Only By Being Added By The Lord

1Co 12:12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

1Co 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.

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Composition

- Jesus' universal church is composed of all Christians, those He saves
- Also, it consists of those He saves who have departed from this life, awaiting eternal life
- Therefore, His universal church is composed of individual Christians, not local churches or bodies of local churches (denominations)

23

Composition

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Heb 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

24

Composition

Heb 12:23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,
Heb 12:24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

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Number

- There is only one universal church
- Therefore, there are not many churches, bodies of local churches like Baptist, Methodist and so on

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Number

Eph 1:22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,
Eph 1:23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

27

Number

Eph 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
Eph 4:5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
Eph 4:6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

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Nature of The Universal Church

1. Enter only by being added by the Lord
2. Composition
3. Number

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Origin

- Jesus' universal church, body of His saved people, began in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus
- Any universal church that began on another day in another place is not Jesus' church
- This would include the Roman Catholic as well as many others

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Origin

Luk 24:47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Luk 24:48 "You are witnesses of these things.

Luk 24:49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

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Origin

Act 1:4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me;

Act 1:5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

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Origin

Act 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Act 2:1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

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Origin

Act 2:2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Act 2:3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

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Origin

Act 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Act 2:5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.

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Origin

Act 2:6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language.

Act 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified."

36

Origin

Act 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

Act 2:38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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Origin

Act 2:41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

Act 2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

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The Lord Keeps Track Of Members

- God knows all members of His church
- There is no error about who is saved by Jesus

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The Lord Keeps Track Of Members

Heb 12:23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

Heb 12:24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

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The Lord Keeps Track Of Members

2Ti 2:19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

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Cannot Be Saved Without Being In His Church

- Jesus died to save all but only saves His church, people who are forgiven when they obey the gospel, become Christians
- Then, He adds each person who is saved to His one church, one assembly of people, one body

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Cannot Be Saved Without Being In His Church

- Again, we obey the gospel when we believe in Jesus enough to repent (change our mind) of our sins, confess Him to be the Son of God and are baptized (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of our sins
- We cannot be saved without obeying the gospel
- And, we cannot be added by Jesus to His one church unless we are saved by Him ⁴³

Cannot Be Saved Without Being In His Church

1Ti 4:9 It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.

1Ti 4:10 For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

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Cannot Be Saved Without Being In His Church

Mat 26:28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

Mat 26:32 "But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

45

Cannot Be Saved Without Being In His Church

Act 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified."

Act 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

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Cannot Be Saved Without Being In His Church

Act 2:38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Act 2:41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

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Cannot Be Saved Without Being In His Church

Act 2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

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Cannot Be Saved Without Being In His Church

Act 20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

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Has No Earthly Organization

- We will study more about this point in the next lesson but we briefly mention it here
- Contrary to perverted concepts of a centrally organized universal institution today, Jesus' universal church has no earthly organization or headquarters
- Jesus is head of His church and rules all individual members by the apostles' teaching

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Has No Earthly Organization

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

Eph 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

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Has No Earthly Organization

Eph 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,
1Pe 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

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Cannot Be Divided

- Although men have wrongly divided what they see as Jesus' universal church into organizations of bodies of local churches, His one universal church cannot be divided
- This is true because there is no earthly organization governing it
- As individuals remain loyal to the Lord by obeying His Word, they are united with Him as head

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Cannot Be Divided

Eph 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
Act 11:23 Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;

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Cannot Be Divided

Act 11:24 for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.

Act 11:25 And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul;

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Cannot Be Divided

Act 11:26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

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Membership Not Affected By Death

- Since the universal church is the body of the saved, death does not affect our relationship with Christ if we are faithful to Him
- When we die, we are still with Christ looking forward to eternal life in heaven

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Membership Not Affected By Death

Heb 12:23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,
Php 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

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Membership Not Affected By Death

Php 1:22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.

Php 1:23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;

Php 1:24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

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Nature of The Universal Church

1. Enter only by being added by the Lord
2. Composition
3. Number
4. Origin
5. The Lord keeps track of members
6. Cannot be saved without being in His church
7. Has no earthly organization
8. Cannot be divided
9. Membership not affected by death

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