



## “The Local Church” (I)

By Vernon Teagarden

*(Note: In this issue we want to continue our study of the Lord’s church by beginning an examination of the local church.)*

Those in the church of Christ were called out of the world of darkness by the gospel, and have been translated (transferred or moved) into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (2 Thess. 2:14; Col. 1:12, 13). Citizens of this kingdom have been born again of incorruptible seed (Jn. 3:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:22, 23). Those called become servants of Christ. He is their Lord and Master (Rom. 6:16-18; 1 Cor. 7:21, 22; Eph. 5:23, 24). Those called are subject to Christ in everything (Eph. 5:23, 24). Furthermore, those called are not their own for they have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Acts 20:28). Consequently, those called are not at liberty to do what they please. In view of these facts, the principles of Christ’s kingdom must come first, or have priority, in their lives (Matt. 6:33).

## THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM IS UNIVERSAL

In Matthew 28:18-20, and in Mark 16:15, 16, Jesus commanded His apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all nations. Those in every nation who were obedient to the gospel call the Lord added to His body, the church (Acts 2:47). The same is true today. From this perspective, this saved body can be referred to as the “universal” church. The universal church, simply put, is the totality of the saved in all parts of the world. Regarding this body of saved, there is but one church of (belonging to) Christ (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:4; Col. 1:18).

## THE LOCAL CHURCH

Another sense in which the word “church” is used in the New Testament is the local sense. In contrast to the “universal” church (the totality of the saved in all parts of the world), the local church is simply the saved in any given geographic location. We read about a number of these local churches in the New Testament. For

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The Southeast

Church of Christ meets at:

35 Walnut Court

Mogadore, OH 44260

Phone: 330.628.7432

## SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Study: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:50 am

6:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 pm

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example, the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2 & 3), or the churches of Galatia, Corinth, Philippi, etc. There were as many local churches as there were groups of Christians in various localities. This is why Paul could say, “... the churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16). These “churches of Christ” were not different denominations because such was unheard of in Paul’s day. They were simply Christians in

different cities who had banded together to work and worship collectively or as one. This was done according to the Lord's will. Moreover, each local congregation continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread (Lord's Supper), and in prayers (Acts 2:42). Whatever they taught, whatever they practiced religiously, it was to be done according to the will of Christ (Col. 3:17).

A close examination of the New Testament reveals that the local church involves a number of things. For example, the local church involves local government, or more specifically, a relationship of certain overseers to certain members (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1). It is a local unit of fellowship where decisions can be made (1 Cor. 16:3-5). Furthermore, the local church involves a local treasury (1 Cor. 16:1, 2; Phil. 4:15, 16; 2 Cor. 11:8, 9). A local church is to practice local discipline (2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Cor. 5:1-13). It is a collective unit that assembles and worships together (1 Cor. 11:18, 20, 33; 14:27; Acts 20:7; Heb. 10:24, 25). Additionally, it is a collective body that works together in carrying out the work (and only the work) that the Lord has assigned it through His word (Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 14:37; Phil.

4:15; Acts 11:27-30; 1 Cor. 16:3; Eph. 4:12; Col. 3:17).

The more one reads the New Testament regarding the church he cannot help coming away understanding what brother Roy E. Cogdill said long ago - *"The church as God designed it, as Christ built it, and as the Holy Spirit has revealed it represents God's ways and they are always not only sufficient but they are best . . . any effort to improve upon God's ways represents unbelief. Any deviation means we have turned away from God's ways to man's ways."* (Walking By Faith, pp., 11, 12).

(Next, What is the work that Christ has assigned the local church to do, and is the local church, as God has designed it sufficient to carry it out?)

**"The Harvest Is Past, The Summer Is Ended..."**  
- Jeremiah 8:20

Have you ever taken the time to consider the importance of the harvest? In a technological age it is easy to take for granted our reliance on a prosperous harvest. Yet in any nation the harvest is everything. It will either bring the joy of prosperity or the despair of want.

We see this stark realization in the lament of the prophet Jeremiah, "The harvest is past, the

summer is ended, and we are not saved", (Jer. 8:20). The great prophet shed tears over the rebellion of the people and pleaded for their repentance. However, in refusing to repent and submit to God in due time, judgment had come upon them.

These heartbreaking words should remind us of not just the importance of an earthly harvest, but also of at least 3 things regarding God's eternal harvest.

1. God has provided a "summer of opportunity" for all to repent. God mercifully gives us a space of time to repent after which there is no chance of salvation. (2 Pet. 3:9-10)

2. During our "summer of opportunity" God has given us a clear, universal rule for sowing and reaping. There are consequences to how we live both in this life and the life to come. (Gal. 6:7-8)

3. God has provided a "Lord of the Harvest", Jesus Christ. We can see His judgment in the imagery of Rev. 14:14-16.

Imagine how many in that day will cry out, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Even better yet, ask yourself, "Will that be my lament?"

- Jeff Haught