The Local Church and Universal Church

Sermon by Donald Townsley

INTRODUCTION

1. There is widespread ignorance of the New Testament meaning and use of the term "church" in the church and out of the church.
2. The word "church" is like the word "ship" -- you have to define <u>how</u> you are using the word:
   (1) "Ship" can mean an air-going vessel or a sea-going vessel.
   (2) The word "church" is used in two ways in the New Testament:
      1. Local
      2. Universal
3. The word "church" is from the Greek word *EKKLESIA*.
4. The word *ekklesia* basically means: an assembly; a congregation; a called-out group.
5. The word "church" accurately describes God's people:
   (1) They have been "called out" of:
      1. Sin into holiness of living -- I Thess. 4:7; Col. 3: 5 - 10
      2. Out of darkness into light -- Col. 1:13; Eph. 5:8; I Thess. 5:5
      3. Out of the world into the kingdom of God -- Col. 1:13
   (2) They have been called by the gospel -- 2 Thess. 2:13 - 14

I. TWO USES OF THE WORD "CHURCH" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

1. The Church Universal:
   (1) The church universal includes all the saved of the earth -- Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23; Heb. 12:23
   (2) The church universal is a spiritual relationship to Christ and God -- I John 1: 7
   (3) It has no organization.
   (4) It has not geographical boundaries.
   (5) It has no mission.
   (6) It is NOT a functional body.
   (7) The Universal church is:
      1. A kingdom of citizens -- Eph. 2:19
      2. A family of children -- Rom. 8: 14 -17
      3. A vine with branches -- John 15:1 - 6
   (8) This church is made up of individuals who are "in Christ" -- I Cor. 12:13
2. The Local Church:
   (1) The local church is not only a relationship, but an organized body -- Phil. 1: 1; I Cor. 1:2; Acts 14:23
   (2) The local church is functional.
   (3) The local congregation, in carrying out its mission, acts as a collective unity -- every member participating, but the final action is an act of the church.
   (4) EXAMPLES of UNIT ACTION:
      1. Worship -- I Cor. 16: 1 - 2; Eph. 5:19; I Cor. 10:17; Acts 20:7
      2. Exercising discipline -- I Cor. 5:4
      3. Benevolence -- 2 Cor. 8: 1 - 5

4. Preaching the gospel -- Phil. 1:5; 4:15; 2 Cor. 11:8

(5) The local church is Christians jointly acting with other Christians.

(6) The essential and distinguishing feature of a local congregation is "TOGETHERNESS".

1. If the will of Christ demands doing something together, then it is congregational action -- I Cor. 16:1 - 2; Acts 11:2; Heb. 10:25; Eph. 5:19; I Cor. 5: 1 - 5
2. If the will of Christ does not demand collective action, it is individual action -- Gal. 6:10; James 1:27; I Tim. 5: 4, 16

II. SOME DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN CHURCH UNIVERSAL AND CHURCH LOCAL:

CHURCH UNIVERSAL	CHURCH LOCAL
1. Is fellowship with Christ and God -- I John 1:7	1. Is fellowship with men -- Acts 9:26; 2:42
2. Is entered by forgiveness of sins -- Acts 2: 38, 41,47, Eunuch	2. Church local is joined -- Acts 9:26
3. Sin cuts one off from God -- John 15: 1 - 6; Gal. 5:4	3. Man controls the fellowship -- I Cor. 5 : 1 - 6; III John 9 - 10
4. Even after death there is fellowship with God -- Phil. 1:23; II Cor. 5:8	4. Fellowship ceases at death
5. No salvation without fellowship with Christ in the church Universal.	5. Possible to be saved without fellowship in Local church, (Ex.: boy in the army 1,000 miles from a local church).
6. Always true to Christ in church Universal.	6. Not always true to Christ in the local church -- III John 9 - 10
7. Cannot divide the church Universal.	7. The church Local can be divided.
8. The church Universal unlimited by place.	8. Church Local limited to place.
9. Has no common treasury.	9. Has a common treasury -- I Cor. 16: 1 - 2
10. Has no work.	10. Has work to do.
11. Has no organization.	11. Has organization -- Phil. 1:1
12. Has one chief Shepherd -- I Pet. 5:4	12. Has lesser Shepherds -- I Pet. 5: 1 - 3

Preached at Sulphur Ridge 1968; Judio, KY 1969; Underwood Hts. 1970