

Speaking of the “Church”

Rom. 16:16

Introduction:

- A. It is hard to speak of the “church” or the “church of Christ” without being misunderstood.
 - 1. Misuse of the term has prompted some to shy away from it.
 - 2. Avoiding the term is not the answer — term is scriptural and Christ-honoring.
 - 3. Any other scriptural term runs same risk of understanding. cf. “Christians meet here”.
- B. We need to know *ways* “church” and “church of” are used in Bible - be able to explain to others.

Discussion:

I. When “Church Of” Is Used for Identification.

- A. To identify possession.
 - 1. “Church(es) of Christ”. (Rom. 16:16; cf. Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:25).
 - 2. “Church(es) of God (the Son)” — “purchased it with *His* blood”. (Acts 20:28).
 - 3. Ill. Is “Johnson’s Store” a proper name or descriptive term?” - What about both?
- B. To identify location and/or composition.
 - 1. Location: “Of Ephesus” (Rev. 2:1); “Of Galatia” (1 Cor. 16:1); “Of Judea” (Gal. 1:22)
 - 2. Location and composition: “Of Thessalonians” (1 & 2 Thess. 1:1) “Of Laodiceans” (Rev. 3:14)
 - 3. Composition: “Of the firstborn” (Heb. 12:23); “Of Gentiles (Rom. 16:4); “Of Saints” (1 Cor. 14:33)

II. When “Church” Is Used Of One Universal Body (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4; 1:22,23)

- A. All the saved everywhere. (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23-27; Heb. 12:23).
- B. Added as saved, not saved then later joined.
- C. Membership controlled only by the Lord.
- D. Some say this is only way it is used. (Examiner people)

III. When “Church(es) Is Used of Many Local Bodies (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:1).

- A. As an organized group of Christians (even when not physically assembled).
 - 1. Received and rejected members (Acts 9:26-28; Rom. 14:1; Tit. 3:10) — sometimes mistakenly (cf. 1 Cor. 5; III John 9).
 - 2. Had local elders and deacons. (Acts 14:26; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:2; cf. Acts 6:3).
 - 3. Were to be doctrinally uniform. (1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 16:1; Col. 4:16).
- B. As a physical assembly of the organized group (1 Cor. 11:18-21; 1 Cor. 14:34,35).
 - 1. Some say this is all that is meant by “church”.
 - a. If so, how could Ephesians elders be elders “of the church” with no church being assembled?
 - b. If so, no church at this place at least 5 days a week.
 - 2. Bible class not the church in this sense.
- C. Not all “together” activity of Christians is church action (Matt. 18:15-18).
 - 1. Else Christians in business together would church action.
 - 2. Else a home Bible study would be church action.

Conclusion:

- A. There is no need to abandon scriptural terms become someone perverts them.
- B. There is a need to properly understand and teach the meaning of terms.
- C. Bible terms may not be official names, but are scriptural ways to describe the church.