**Identifying the One Church (4) – Work**

**Introduction**

1. Jesus promised He would build HIS church upon the truth of Peter’s confession **(cf. Matthew 16:18).**
2. Later, He likened the church to a landowner hiring laborers for his vineyard **(cf. Matthew 20:1).**
3. **The church Jesus built is a working institution, established and authorized by the Divine.**
4. Her work is distinctive, and clearly patterned in the New Testament.
5. **Any church who has work which differs from that of the One church Jesus built, seen in the NT, is not the Lord’s church.**
6. The Church
7. Who is the church? (Not what…)
   1. **Acts 2:47** – Those who are saved.
      1. People who have responded to the gospel **(vv. 40-41).**
      2. *ekklēsia*; a calling out; an assembly. (people – context determines specific – **cf. Acts 7:38,** Israelites, ***“congregation in the wilderness”***; **Acts 19:41**, rioters in Ephesus, ***“assembly”***)
   2. **Acts 8:1, 3; 9:1-2, 4, 13-14, 20-21** – The church is people. People are the church.
      1. **(8:1)** – church being persecuted. Saul persecuting. Who is the church?
      2. **(8:3)** – men and women.
      3. **(9:1)** – disciples of the Lord.
      4. **(v. 2**) – of the Way (Jesus is the Way, **John 14:6**), men or women.
      5. **(vv. 13-14** – Ananias after instructed by Jesus) – saints, all who call on Your name.
      6. **(vv. 20-21)** – those who call on this name – Christ.
      7. **Church** – People, men and women, followers of Christ, those obedient to Christ. (Christians – individual; church – collective)
         1. **Important – Works on individual level, and works on collective level – the church.**
         2. Things individuals can do that the church cannot do, and vice versa.
         3. **Individual** – **James 1:27** – care for orphans and widows.
            1. This is not authority for church action, but individual action.
            2. (**vv. 5, 7, 12, 25, 26**) – him, man, one – context is individual.
         4. **Church** – **Acts 20:7** – Lord’s Supper – disciples came together – cannot be observed individually.
      8. **What is the church (collective) authorized to do? 🡪**
      9. **Acts 9:4-5** – church being persecuted – Jesus being persecuted.
         1. Jesus was not being persecuted in a literal, personal sense – He was not there bodily any longer.
         2. His body, the church was being persecuted – ***“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Corinthians 12:27).***
         3. **Cf. Ephesians 1:22-23** – Christ is the authority of the church – He controls it – the church’s work/mission/purpose is outlined and defined by Christ
         4. **It is helpful to look at the nature of Christ’s work to know the nature of the work of the church, which is His body. 🡪**
8. What is the nature of her work? (Spiritual)
   1. Nature of Jesus’ (the Head of the church) work.
      1. **John 6:25-27** – After feeding 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish. (12 baskets of fragments taken up after)
         1. **(v. 25)** – sought after Jesus and found Him.
         2. **(vv. 26-27)** – Jesus’ work in feeding them ultimately was spiritual.
            1. **Sign** – work signifying something. (miracle)
            2. **Seek Me not for signs** – miracle signified Deity (creative power) – power to spiritual life.
            3. **(v. 27)** – They wanted physical food, but Jesus’ purpose, and what they should seek, is spiritual nourishment.
         3. **This was Jesus’ purpose all along:**
            1. **Mark 6:33-34** – No spiritual shepherd – began to teach them.
            2. **Luke 9:11** – spoke to them about the kingdom of God.
      2. **Provision of food meant as a sign** – as all miracles are – **cf. John 20:30-31**
      3. **Jesus’ work was spiritual from the beginning:**
         1. ***“His name [is] Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).***
         2. ***“in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions” (Luke 2:46) – “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49)*.**
         3. ***“From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Matthew 4:17).***
   2. The work of His body, the church, is of the same nature – ***“the church of the living God, [is] the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).***
   3. The work of the church is not:
      1. **Social** – philanthropy, entertainment, recreation, relationships, etc.
      2. **Political** – platform for political efforts, donating to campaigns, etc.
      3. **Financial** – the church is not a business, fund raisers, etc.
      4. **Familial** – Marriage counseling, match making, etc.
9. **The work of the one church of the NT is spiritual, which work is 🡪**
10. The Work of the Church
11. Evangelism – making disciples through preaching the word.
    1. **Matthew 28:18-20** – the great commission given.
       1. Disciples made – everywhere, all nations.
       2. Accomplished by preaching the gospel.
    2. **Occurred on individual level, but also collective (church, congregational) level.**
    3. **Acts 11:22-26** – After gospel preached at Antioch, and ***“a great number believed.”***
       1. **(vv. 22-23)** – Jerusalem heard of Antioch church and sent Barnabas. (encouraged – led to others evangelizing)
       2. **(v. 24)** – While there, Barnabas was also involved in evangelism – more believed.
       3. **(vv. 25-26)** – Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch, and they taught more people.
    4. **Acts 13:2-3** – Holy Spirit commanded church at Antioch to send Barnabas and Saul to preach.
       1. ***“the work to which I have called them”*** – ***“bear My name before Gentiles” (Acts 9:15*** – Jesus to Ananias about Saul).
       2. **14:25-27** – Work completed – door of faith opened to Gentiles.
       3. **DID NOT go out to provide physical aid, but spiritual.**
    5. **Philippians 4:15-17** – Philippi shared in evangelical work with Paul by supporting him.
       1. ***“beginning of the gospel”*** – being preached by Paul, aided by Philippians.
       2. **(v. 17)** – They shared in a wonderful work, thus, fruit was added (spiritual) to their account.
12. Edification – building up the body of Christ with the word.
    1. **Ephesians 4:11-16** – gifts given by God, roles and offices appointed, for edification of the body of Christ.
       1. **(vv. 11-12)** – All teaching roles for spiritual edification.
       2. **(vv. 13-14)** – for unity and maturity (Christ likeness), to not be led astray by false teaching.
       3. **(vv. 15-16)** – To grow up into the head of the church – Christ.
          1. He joins the body together for supplying, and sharing in edification – spiritual goal!
          2. ***“the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God” (Colossians 2:19).***
          3. **The goal – become like Christ** – to a Christ-like maturity – built up, or edified through teaching.
    2. **Acts 20:27, 28, 32** – Paul to the Ephesian elders – they were to feed the flock – edify the Ephesian church.
       1. Goal is not to gain social skills, business skills, athletic skills, etc.
       2. **Goal is to receive the spiritual inheritance – only way to reach it is through the building up through the word.**
13. Benevolence – lending aid to needy saints.
    1. **Acts 2:44-45** – Upon establishment of the church, they were given to the INTERNAL work of benevolence.
       1. ***“all who believed”; “divided them among all”***
       2. ***“all things in common”*** – in that, your needs will be supplied by the ability that I have. (and vice versa)
    2. **(Later) Acts 11:27-30** – News of imminent famine.
       1. (**v. 29**) – determination to send relief to ***“BRETHREN”*** in need.
       2. **(v. 30)** – sent to elders who would disperse to those in need.
    3. **(Later) 1 Corinthians 16:1-3** – The process of accumulating funds.
       1. Collection by the saints, for the saints.
       2. Bear the gift to Jerusalem – for needy saints.
    4. **2 Corinthians 9:7** – A gift that is purposed in one’s heart – not grudgingly, but cheerfully.
       1. **Not tithing** – OT ordinance.
       2. **Not a percentage of income agreed upon with the church, and officially signed onto as a condition of placing membership.**
    5. The ***“administration of this service…supplies the needs of the saints” (2 Corinthians 9:12).***
       1. Not human institutions.
       2. Not members of the community, but of the church.

**Conclusion**

1. Christ built His one church and gave her work to do.
2. That work which the church was given is spiritual in nature.
3. **The work is distinctive, and the pattern is seen in scripture for evangelism, edification, and benevolence to saints in need.**
4. **Any church which has work that differs from the work outlined for the church in the NT is not the ONE church of our Lord.**