

The Church, An Unnamed Entity

The ‘Healer of Schisms’ and ‘Offender of Traditions’

Eph. 4:4 *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.*

**Denominating is dividing the indivisible.
The moment you name it to differ, you have
denied Eph. 4:4.**

The Church has no surname.

Only the Head.

In our preceding lessons, we have established that Scripture has not presented the Christian Church as a physical structure and as a sect or denomination. If it did, the instrument of that denominationalism would be nomenclature (naming it). That would have been the frontier factor because anything that is named is denominated from others. ‘1/4’ is a denomination illustrating that ‘one’ (the numerator) has been denominated or divided into ‘four’ parts.

Since name is given to something or someone to differ or divide or separate from others to show

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ownership, if the Church is given such identity, it would equally suggest that the Church is more than one in Scripture. Therefore, the Scripture presents the Church as ‘one indivisible entity’ under one head, Jesus Christ, thus making Him one head who has one body with many groups and individual members. The church is described not denominated (John 17:20-23). The church has no surname. Only the Head, Christ (Eph. 4:4, Col. 1:18, 24). The fact that there are many members of this one body makes no increase in the number of it. It remains: ‘ONE’ head (Jesus Christ) over ‘ONE’ body of believers. Therefore, the idea of naming it to differ one from another is a nullity; the need does not arise except to identify the different locations in which the Church gathers locally: ‘The Church in Ephesus’, ‘The Church in Corinth’, ‘The Church in Akwa Ibom State’, ‘The Church in Ukanafun’ etc.

Instead, in Scripture, what we see are terms used to describe our relationship with the one true God in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as well as our functions. For instance, ‘The Church (people) of God’ to indicate our relationship with the Father (1 Cor. 1:2), ‘The Churches of Christ’ to indicate our relationship with the Son (Rom. 16:16), and

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‘The Kingdom of the Spirit’ to indicate our relationship with the Holy Spirit (John 18:36; Eph. 2:22; Rom. 14:17). Note that the expression ‘Churches of Christ’ used in Rom. 16:16 is not a denomination name. It is a description, meaning ‘the local assemblies that belong to Christ’, in the same way that ‘Church of God’ means ‘the assembly that belongs to God’.

Why then do we have believers’ groups around us all naming themselves to differ one from another? It seems that the extant mistake made by many of taking physical structures as Churches, has begotten another mistake of naming those structures according to the volition of those sponsoring their erection.

Here is a retiree who is paid his or her entitlements who chooses to buy parcels of land and builds a gigantic hall (confused for Church). Because he is a Christian who could read the Bible and maybe, had been teaching some Bible classes in his local assembly, nothing stops him or her from being crowned as both the senior pastor and general superintendent or overseer automatically.

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Those gathering around him cannot distinguish between the Church and the hall he has built. But that is tragic because, in the words of our Master, Jesus, if the light that was given to our body becomes dark, He marvels at how darkened that body would turn. So, after my man / lady achieves completion of the physical structure confused for Church, ministry has started. But, tell me, if a person cannot separate 'inside the house' from 'outside' is such not blind? In the same vein, if one does not know the difference between 'the Church' and the physical building occupied by the Church, what should we say such a person is? One sure thing we are aware from Christ is that both the blind leaders and the blind followers they lead will fall into the same pit (Matt. 15:14). Oh knowledge!

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. What is the scriptural name for the Christian Church?

- * None. The Church is described not denominated. Scripture gives relationships and functions, not titles:
 - ‘Church of God’ (1. Cor. 1:2), describing the relationship with the Father.
 - ‘Churches of Christ’ (Rom. 16:16), describing the relationship with the Son.
 - ‘Household of faith’ (Gal. 6:10).
 - ‘Body of Christ’ (1 Cor. 12:27).
 - ‘Bride’ (Rev. 21:9).

If God wanted a name, He would have given one. He gave a Head instead (Col. 1:18).

2. Between corporate and individual salvation, which does Scripture endorse?

- * Both, but individual first. “Work out your own salvation” (Phil. 2:12). God saves persons, then adds them to people (Acts 2:47). You are not saved because you joined a church. You are joined to the Church because you are saved. There is no group ticket to heaven. “The soul who sins shall die.” (Eze. 18:20)

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3. How many Churches are there in the Bible?

- * ONE. "There is one body." (Eph. 4:4, 1 Cor. 12:12-13)
- * Many local gatherings, 'churches' plural (Rev. 1:11), but one universal Church. Like one water in many cups. The cup is not the water. Ukanafun, Corinth, Ephesus. Locations, not denominations.

4. Who is qualified to enrol a believer into the Church?

- * The Holy Spirit. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. 12:13)
"The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:37)
- * Not the 'senior pastor / general overseer' who built the hall. Not the retiree with the entitlements. No man enrolls you into Christ's Body.
- * Preachers baptize in water. Christ baptizes into the Body (Matt. 3:11).

5. Can the believer enter the Church without a physical building? How?

- * Yes by new birth (John 3:3-5).
- * The thief on the tree entered Paradise (Luke 23:43) without ever seeing a cathedral. You do not go to church to become Church. You

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become Church and then gather, which could be “house to house” (Acts 2:46). The building is where the Church meets, not what the Church is.

6. Which is scripturally correct to say: “I am coming back from Church” or “I am coming back from a Church service”?
 - * “I am coming back from Church” implies the Church is a place you left. But you ARE the Church (1 Cor. 3:16). You cannot come back from yourself. You come back from service – the gathering of the Church.
 - * Say it right, believe it right.
7. What is an acceptable (scriptural) reason for a local assembly to have a name?
 - * Location only. “The church of God which is at Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2), “the church in your house” (Rom. 16:5), “the church of the Laodiceans” (Col. 4:16).
 - * Unacceptable: Doctrine, founder, experience: ‘Winners Chapel’, ‘Deeper Life’, ‘Mountain of Fire’. These denominate. Scripture designates: “The Church in Port Harcourt.” Period. Anything else divides the numerator.

Prayer

Father, we repent for denominating what You called ONE. Forgive us for naming what You never named. We renounce the spirit of dividing Your numerator. Today, we tear down the signs that bear our names, doctrines and experiences. From now, we are simply members of one church gathering in various locations with Christ as Head. If we can build a hall, let it serve the Body, not replace the Body. If we teach Bible classes, let us make disciples for You, not ours. We refuse to be blind builders. Open our eyes to see 'Eph. 4:4' as our constitution. Amen.