Role of the Church in Today’s World

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| S.R. Ephesians 4:1 - 16 | 3 – 20 – 2011 |

1. Intro. Continuation of roles – God, as creator, has the right to assign. (1 – 23 – 11)
   1. God has planned to have a special people in and through Christ since before the world began (Eph.1:3-4)
   2. God planned to enjoy fullness of purpose by means of those people (Eph. 1:18 – 23)
   3. God chose to have a called out people from every nation to be His special household (Eph. 2:19 – 22)
   4. God chose to receive glory by means of His church as we find our “fullness” in Him (Eph. 3:17 – 21)
   5. As God wrote His church in Ephesus He reminds them of the gifts He gave for the building up of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:1 – 16)
2. The church, as the family, has a God – assigned charter.
   1. God has assigned his family a charter delineating its function and role.
   2. Jesus Christ is head of the family (Eph. 1:22 – 23)
   3. Jesus assigned other servants specific roles and responsibilities: (Eph. 4:11)
      1. Apostles - Christ’s speakers (Matt. 18:18; John 16:12-15; 1 Cor. 14:37)
      2. Prophets – Christ’s speakers Eph. 2:20 – 22 – declared the charter of the family
      3. Evangelists – to announce the good news (Acts 21:8)
      4. Pastors and Teachers – (Acts 20:28 – 32; Eph. 4:12 – 16)
   4. Confusion regarding the use of the term church:
      1. “Universal” (Christ over all)
         1. Each *individual* is “added to the church” as he is saved by obeying Christ (Acts 2:47).
         2. The total number of these saved *individuals* is the *church universal.*
         3. The *universal church* has no *organization* by which all of the saved can act together.
         4. The universal church is *not* to be thought of as composed of all the local churches, but of all the *saved individuals*.
      2. “Local” (Elders oversee – Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; Heb. 13:17)
         1. When a number of the saved in any locality agree to work and worship together in a scripturally organized way, a local *church* exists in the place.
         2. The only *organization* of the *church* in the New Testament is the local church with its elders, deacons and other holy ones.
         3. Each church is a separate entity with its own adequate, all – sufficient arrangement.
   5. Note: The term “church” is a collective noun that groups people together and describes them as a family. The Bible uses the word “church” to refer to a group, not an individual. We must be careful in our understanding of how we use the phrase “work of the church.” When I use that term I am speaking of the work God has assigned us as a group, acting as one, to accomplish. This “church” is a team under the oversight of elders. Failure to make a distinction between what God has assigned us as individual Christians to accomplish and the work assigned a local body of believers, functioning as a unit to accomplish, leads to many digressions from Bible patterns.
   6. Characteristics of the church “Universal”
      1. Has only One Shepherd (1 Peter 5;4)
      2. Satan cannot prevail against (Matthew 16:18)
      3. Has no earthly assembly (Heb. 12:23)
      4. Has no earthly oversight
      5. Has no earthly treasury
      6. It has no earthly collective work to do
   7. Characteristics of the church “Local”
      1. Has earthly shepherds (1 Peter 5:2 – 3)
      2. Satan can prevail against (Revelation 2 and 3)
      3. Has an earthly assembly (1 Cor. 11:18)
      4. Has earthly oversight (Acts 14:23)
      5. Has an earthly treasury (1 Cor. 16:1 – 3)
      6. It has earthly collective work (Rev. 2:2, 5)
3. What Does the Charter Authorize? (1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Thess. 2:14 – 15)
   1. Assembly (Hebrews 10:23 – 25; I Cor. 11:18)
   2. Worship together (Acts 20:7)
   3. Edification of holy ones (1 Cor. 14:23 – 26; Eph. 4:12 – 16) House construction
   4. Support of Gospel Preaching (1 Cor. 9:6-14; Phil.1:5; 4:15-16; 3 Jn. 5-8)
   5. Care for its own needy (Acts 4:34-35)
      1. A family responsible for its own
      2. Acts 11:27 – 30
      3. 1 Corinthians 16:1
      4. Romans 15:25
      5. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 – 11
   6. Illustration of Purpose:
      1. Hospital (Role: Medical services)
         1. Must be prepared to fight fires in the facility
         2. But not throughout the neighborhood
      2. Christians individually can help anyone considered worthy (Gal. 6:10; Acts 5:4)
         1. Hospital employees could join volunteer fire department.
         2. Church members can help individuals the church cannot help (1 Tim. 5:8, 16)
      3. 1 Timothy 5:16 “16 If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”
      4. *Note: If the church relieves widows with families, it limits its ability to help helpless widows.* Like a hospital fighting fires.
4. Conclusion: May we stay focused on what God’s charter says is our purpose as His family in our local assemblies. Only then will we bring glory to His holy name.
   1. Eph. 1:22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

* 1. God’s charter is expressed through Christ - Eph. 2:18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,

22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.