

Two Churches

Are you part of the “brotherhood” (1 Peter 2:17)? Do you know what the “brotherhood” is?

The “brotherhood” is a reference to the people of God under the New Covenant. It is describing the universal body of believers in Jesus. The term is not being used to describe a local body (church) of disciples. The gospel writers always make a clear distinction between the two churches.

What are the differences between the universal and local church?

- The universal church is unlimited in scope (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:22-24; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 12:22-23). It comprises all Christians. The local church is limited to a group of Christians who have agreed to do God’s work in a specific location (1 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; Romans 16:16).
- There is only one universal church (Matthew 16:18). There are many local churches (Revelation 2-3; Galatians 1:2).
- One is added to the universal church once they submit to Jesus (Acts 2:47). One must join themselves into the fellowship of a local church (Acts 9:26).
- The universal church is made up of all the saints. It is not a composition of all local churches! A local church is made up of a specific group of Christians.
- Only the saved are added to the universal church (Acts 2:47). It is possible to allow hypocrites into a local church (1 John 2:19).
- The universal church only has one Shepherd (John 10:16). A local church is to have a plurality of “lesser” shepherds (1 Peter 5:2-3).
- The universal church is organized with Jesus as the head and Christians as members of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12; Colossians 1:18). Local churches are organized with shepherds, deacons, preachers, and saints (Philippians 1:1).
- The universal church began in 33 A.D. on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:47). Local churches are established at various times.
- Death doesn’t affect a Christian’s fellowship in the universal church (Daniel 2:44; 1 Corinthians 15:24). After death, a Christian is no longer in fellowship with the local church.
- Satan cannot prevail over the universal church (Daniel 2:44). Sadly, he prevails against local churches all the time (1 Corinthians 1:11-15).

Are you part of the two churches?

- Have you been added to the universal church (Acts 2:37-47)? Only the saved are members of the church!
- Have you joined a faithful local church (Acts 9:26)? God wants every Christian to be in fellowship with a local church.

Conclusion:

Let us always avoid confusing the universal and local body of God’s people.

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