



The Universal Church and the Local Church

The scriptures refer to the “church” in two different senses. There is the universal church and the local church. The universal church is also referred to as the “brotherhood” (1 Peter 2:17). It is that which Jesus promised to establish and build (Matthew 16:18). It is comprised of all Christians.

The local church is different than the universal church. Unlike the universal church, a local church is made up of Christians who have agreed to be in fellowship in a specific location. They have agreed to join, have a common treasury, and appoint leaders.

While the Lord adds every Christian to the universal church, one must decide to join a local church.

Provide some other descriptive terms for the universal church below.

Contrasting the Universal and Local Church

- There is a difference in scope.
 - What saints comprise the universal church (Ephesians 5:23-25; Acts 20:28)?
 - What saints comprise a local church (Philippians 1:1)?
- There is a difference in how one becomes a member.
 - How does one become a member of the universal church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 1 Corinthians 12:13)?
 - How does one become a member of a local church (Acts 9:26)?
- There is a difference in make-up.
 - Who makes up the universal church (Ephesians 5:23; Hebrews 12:22-23)?

- Who makes a local church (Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 1:2)?
- There is a difference in spiritual standing before God.
 - Who are the only ones added to the universal church (Acts 2:47)?
 - Who could erroneously be part of a local church (1 John 2:19)?
- There is a difference in leadership.
 - Who is the one Shepherd of the universal church (John 10:1-16)?
 - Who is appointed to lead local churches (1 Peter 5:1-4)?
- Can you think of any other differences?

The Work of the Local Church

- The local church is to be united and act as one (Acts 4:32; 1 Corinthians 1:10).
- The local church is to assemble for worship (1 Corinthians 14:23-26).
- The local church is to pool financial resources and talents to do God's work (Philippians 1:5; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3).
- The local church is to appoint qualified leadership and agree to submit to that leadership (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Philippians 1:1; Hebrews 13:17).
- The local church is to hold one another accountable to righteous and godly living (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).
- The local church is to edify and help build up one another in the faith (1 Thessalonians 5:11-14).
- The local church must strive to maintain fellowship with Christ (Revelation 2:4-5; 2 John 9-11).