

Remnant Life Church  
August 28, 2022  
**Our Church at 10 Years**  
Part 1

We are entering into the time period leading up to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Remnant Life's existence

- I'm not going to go back to how it all began as I'll touch on that when we come together to celebrate on October 2
- But I want to lead us into this special time by taking a closer look at The Church
  - What is it?
  - What is it not?
  - What is the function and purpose of the church?
  - What is its mission?
  - How does it succeed and how does it fail?
  - And then certainly, who and what is this church?
- We'll do that over the next several weeks leading up to our celebration Sunday

The most logical place to start in this journey is to try and clearly understand how and when it got started.

**READ – Acts 2:42-47**

What Roxanne just read is the first account of a group of believers who regularly gathered together to worship God because of the work of Jesus Christ – IOW, the first church.

- This is not to say that people did not gather before this time to worship God
- When the children of Israel left Egypt, God gave Moses instructions to set up a place to worship called a tabernacle
- Each time they stopped they would set up, take down, and carry it with them (Ex 40)
- Once they arrived and settled in the promised land there was, of course, the temple in Jerusalem
  - It was built by Solomon on direct orders and according to the plans given to him by his father David (I Chron 22:6; 28:11)
    - Completed in 957 BC
  - It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC when they captured and scattered the southern kingdom of Judah
  - Later, several edicts and directives were given to begin its reconstruction most notably through the times of Nehemiah and Ezra through the Persian, Medes, and Babylonian on the orders of Darius, Cyrus, Xerxes and Artaxerxes the first and second with much of it completed around 444 BC.
  - Herod the Great took it upon himself to engage in a program of renovating and adding to the temple around 20 BC with the Romans bringing the final destruction in 70 AD, during the Siege of Jerusalem.
    - Note that the temple was at its later fullest measure of glory just prior to Jesus' arrival and it was destroyed just 40 years after his departure.
    - Jesus preached and worshipped in a beautiful temple

But the passage in **Acts** is the beginning of something new birthed by the coming of the Holy Spirit

- It is no longer under the rules of the OT for what must be done and how
- It is not a declared time such as the feasts and festivals given by Moses - although all of these remained in place
- It is a gathering of believers whose lives have been changed by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Church

- It is one of the most familiar and yet misunderstood elements of Christianity
  - It is perhaps for this reason that so many do not attend
  - And yet how much of what church means to us is not necessarily found in understanding every aspect of what it is, but what you are expecting to receive when you attend.
  - Jim went to church on a Sunday morning. He heard the organist miss a note during the prelude, and he winced. He overheard a teenager talking to a friend when everybody was supposed to be in prayer and shook his head. He felt like the usher was watching to see what he put in the offering plate and it made him angry. He couldn't help but notice that the preacher misspoke five times in the sermon. And as he rushed out through the side door before the closing hymn was completed, he muttered to himself, "Never again! What a bunch of clods and hypocrites!"

Ron also went to church on Sunday morning. He heard the organists play a very difficult arrangement of 'A Mighty Fortress' and was thrilled by the majesty of it. He heard a young girl take a moment in the service to speak her simple, moving message of the difference her faith makes in her life to a friend she had brought to church for the first time. He was glad to see they were taking up a special offering for the hungry children of Nigeria. He especially appreciated the sermon because it answered a question that had bothered him for a long time. He thought, as he walked out the door, "How can anyone come here and not feel the presence of God?" Both men attended on the exact same Sunday and at the same church sitting just a few seats away from the other. Each found what he was looking for.
- One of the many things that makes church so unique is that it is one of the few aspects of Christian theology that can actually be physically observed...by everyone
  - For many, church is the first and often only point in which Christianity is encountered
  - For both the member and the first-time visitor, the church's existence represents the presence and witness of Jesus Christ
- But what is it since the word itself is used in a plethora of ways and meanings?
  - We go to church
  - We say that people belong to a church
  - The media might say the word church but rarely, if ever, specifies in what way it is being used – although most times in a negative light
  - Government legislation mentions church but only in the way that it and the state must be kept separate

- People count on and often turn to the church in times of distress for comfort
- And so, all of these apply in some measure but we still are left asking the question, “What is it?”
- Part of the difficulty stems from, as we just touched on, the multiple usages of the word “church”
  - Many times, it is used in reference to an architectural structure.
    - “Drive down two blocks and turn left at the church on the corner.”
  - We also use the word when referring to a particular body of believers
    - “That’s the Johnson family, they attend the First United Methodist Church on the other side of town.”
  - At other times it is used to identify a particular denomination such as the Presbyterian or Baptist Church
- Perhaps some of the difficulty in understanding exactly what church is owes to the fact that the doctrine of the church has seldom been directly addressed in the same way that other doctrinal pillars have
  - For instance, Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity were given special and direct attention in the fourth and fifth centuries
  - In the same way the atoning work of Christ and the shed blood was of great importance for understanding throughout the Middle Ages
  - The doctrine of salvation came under great study and scrutiny in the 16<sup>th</sup> century
  - At that same time the meaning and acceptance of grace was also being intensely examined
- Scholars of a more recent time have written that so little emphasis has been given to the church perhaps because it was simply taken for granted
- But that can no longer be the case thanks in large part to a powerful ecumenical movement that took place beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century
  - What that simply means is that there have been more purposeful attempts for many different groups within the church to come together
- The reason more attention was given to the church itself is due in large part that more attention was directed at the relationship of churches with and to one another
  - But that was not the only aspect of church that was being studied – it was also in regard to the relationships between...
    - ...the church and secular culture
    - ...the church and missions
    - ...the church and social change
    - As well as the emphasis of churches interacting with surrounding churches
  - Now, I have said this many times before, but as we clearly see in [Acts 2](#), there were no denominations at the beginning of the church
    - In fact, look at what Roxanne read...
    - *Acts 2:44 – All believers were together and had everything in common.*
  - Denominations are a creation of man as a way to deal with our inability to come to a common ground on worship, the interpretation of the Scripture, order of the service, music, theology, and whether we should sprinkle, dip, or dunk if we baptize.



- I truthfully do not understand why we have allowed ourselves to be so separated by these things but one thing I do know, there will be no denominations in heaven
    - Certainly, very wonderful traditions have been birthed by the uniqueness of our differences but too often the differences are a much more prominent focus than our similarities
    - And because of this, many either do not see or have become discouraged and have lost the value of the gathering of God's people
  - And certainly, churches themselves must also share the responsibility for the struggle to understand
    - Much more of the focus today is on what God is doing rather than who He is
    - We spend so much time, energy, and resources on the things of God rather than the person of God
    - We want to be where the spiritual action is, rather than desiring to simply be where He is
  - I have attended, visited, and worshipped in many types and denominations of churches
    - Methodist, Baptist, Southern Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Church of God, Brethren in Christ, Foursquare, Charismatic, Pentecostal, Assemblies of God, Mennonite, and non-denominational
    - There are beautiful, meaningful and very moving elements in each and every one but you can see why someone considering church for the first time could have a hard time understanding what it is all about.
- The word "church" as read in the NT comes from the Greek term *Ekklesia*
  - *Ekklesia* is actually formed from two other Greek words that mean an assembly and to call out
  - So, to translate the word church literally would be to say that it is an assembly or gathering of called out ones.
    - Called out from what? – from the world
    - How did that happen? – because of Jesus Christ
  - I also found a very broad definition that said this – It is the place where a small group of the population goes on a Sunday morning.
    - Of course, this speaks nothing of the importance and power of the church
    - It does not say that God brings people together
    - It says nothing of the quality and specialness of the people who attend
    - And it does not speak of the change that has taken place, not only in those who attend but those they interact with to spread the Good News of the redemptive and cleansing power of the blood of Jesus
- And not everyone feels the same way about church
  - I heard the story of a mother who came into her son's room and said, "William, it's Sunday morning. Time to get up and get ready to go to church. Get up!" From under the covers came a sleepy, barely audible voice, "I don't want to get up and I don't want to go to church." "That ridiculous." She replied, "Now get up, get dressed, and go to church!"

“NO!”, he defiantly shot back, “And I’ll give you two reasons why I don’t want to go, I don’t like them and they don’t like me!”

“Nonsense!”, she told him. “And I’ll give you two reasons why you should go; first, you’re 45 years old and second, you’re the pastor!”

- In the weeks to come we are going to look at the elements of the church that should be clearly understood
  - What is the purpose and mission of the church?
  - Why do some churches succeed while others fail and must close their doors?
  - Where does RLC fit into all of this?