

Basics: A Study of The Church

- * What is The Church?
- * What makes The Church...The Church?
- * Where in Scripture do we find an understanding of The Church?
- * How do you recognize The Church?
- * What is the purpose of The Church?

I. The Nature and Explanation of The Church.

Ephesians 5:25-27 (ICB)

25 Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. Christ died for the church 26 to make it belong to God. Christ used the word to make the church clean by washing it with water. 27 Christ died so that he could give the church to himself like a bride in all her beauty. He died so that the church could be pure and without fault, with no evil or sin or any other wrong thing in it.

- A. From this we learn what The Lord says and how He feels about this entity known as The Church!
 - 1. Jesus died so that The Church belongs to God!
 - 2. He died so that The Church would be in relationship to Him!
 - 3. He died to cleans The Church and make it pure!
- B. So, we can summarize exclusively from this scripture that The Church is:

The part of God's creation that has responded to God's love expressed through Christ and has therefore been restored to right relationship with God through His cleansing!
- C. This relationship actually restores the original purposes of God from creation!! Notice the similar wording from both Genesis and the letter to Ephesus!

Ephesians 1:22-23 (NLT)

22 God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. 23 And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

II. To look closer at the “word meaning” side of things we understand
The Church to be the “ekklesia” or assembly of Believers in Christ.

A. Note some examples in scripture of this “ekklesia” or “assembly”
of Believers in Christ!

Acts 2:46-47 (NLT)

46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— 47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Acts 8:1 (NLT)

1 Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen.

Acts 9:31 (NLT)

31 The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.

Acts 11:25-26 (NLT)

25 Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul. 26 When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people. (It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.)

1. So, the point that we want to see and formulate our understanding from is...
2. The Church of Jesus Christ is the assembly of believers across the world who have accepted faith in Christ!
3. The Church is multicultural, multigenerational with a central core belief of The Lordship of Jesus Christ!

4. Because of the great diversity of humanity, The Church expresses its faith in Christ in multiple and beautiful ways!
- B. The Church is invisible, yet visible as theologian Wayne Grudem explains it.
1. Outside a local fellowship, the members of the True Church are invisible in that no one can see a man's heart!
 2. Maybe that's what Paul refers to when he says this to Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:19 (NIV)

19 Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

3. Yet visible, in that I serve The Gospel to those around me:

James 2:18 (TPT)

18 But someone might object and say, "One person has faith and another person has works." Go ahead then and prove to me that you have faith without works and I will show you faith by my works as proof that I believe.

- C. The Church is local and universal!

1. In the New Testament "church" is a term that may be applied to a local gathering in a home, in a city or the church around the world.

Romans 16:3-5 (NIV)

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. 4 They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. 5 Greet also the church that meets at their house.

1 Corinthians 1:2 (NIV)

2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

Acts 9:31 (NIV)

31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

2. So, we can conclude from examples throughout scripture that the "ekklesia of God" or The Church, are those who have been numbered with the those baptized into Christ!

III. Let's also learn and understand more about The Church through its many descriptions and metaphors.

A. There are various metaphors of family and other examples used to describe The Church.

1. Fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, older, younger, brothers, sisters...all that describe family relations.
2. We are called The Bride of Christ; therefore, there is the husband and wife analogy.
3. There is the explanation of vines and branches, crops in a field and harvest.
4. There is the example of The Church being a building in which God dwells built by new "living stones"!
5. The Church is also called a new "priesthood" that is set apart to serve God and mankind!
6. The Church is called the pillar of truth!
7. The Church is described as The Body of Christ that takes its directions from The Head/Christ.

B. From all of these we can assume that the Lord uses these writings and descriptions to express the purpose of The Church!

IV. Last, we need to understand that there is a distinguishing from God of The Church and The Kingdom of God!

A. The Kingdom of God is the authority, power and reign of God in any particular sphere of life. The Kingdom exist anywhere the reign of God is allowed. The Church is the community of believers within that sphere of God's Kingdom that perpetuates the reign of God through the Lordship of Christ and His message/Gospel. The Kingdom is the rule of God, The Church is a society of men.

1. It may sound like word games or splitting hairs, but we must have an accurate understanding of who we are and Who God is!
2. Jesus and the Early Church preached The Kingdom, not The Church!
3. When people enter The Kingdom of God, they join The Church or the human fellowship of believers.
4. The Church witnesses of and preaches The Kingdom!
5. The Church is the instrument of The Kingdom of God.
6. Or you could say it this way: The Church should be The Custodian of The Kingdom.

B. While there are many directions and approaches to understanding and approaching the truth of The Church, suffice it to say:

We should willingly and enthusiastically be a part of both the local and universal Church of Jesus Christ.

1. This is where we grow!
2. This is where we serve!

23 So now we must cling tightly to the hope that lives within us, knowing that God always keeps his promises! 24 Discover creative ways to encourage others and to motivate them toward acts of compassion, doing beautiful works as expressions of love. 25 This is not the time to pull away and neglect meeting together, as some have formed the habit of doing, because we need each other! In fact, we should come together even more frequently, eager to encourage and urge each other onward as we anticipate that day dawning.