
THE CHURCH

- I. Names for the Church
- II. What is the Church
- III. The Beginning of the Church
- IV. The Foundation of the Church
- V. The Government of the Church
- VI. Church Membership

I. Names for the Church

- The “Church”
- The Church of God
- House of God
- Temple of God

II. What is the Church

A. ***Meaning of the word – Church.*** The word that Jesus chose to describe His people was an ancient Greek word – “Ecclesia,” which means, “the called out ones, assembly or congregation.”

The Church is composed of those who have been called out of sin into righteousness to come out from the world (2 Cor 6:17, 18) and into Christ for the purpose of transacting business for God. “But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who *called you out of darkness into his marvelous light* (I Peter 2:9).” *References: Acts 7:38.*

B. ***Local and general significance of the word.*** The term Church refers to the individual, the individual congregation, and to the worldwide community of God’s people. *References: Acts 5:11; Acts 9:31; Rom. 16:3-5, Col. 4:15; Phile. 2; 1Cor. 10:32 and 1Timothy 3:15.*

Groups of Christians may be separated by geography but still be one in Christ and His Church. Perhaps Thomas Campbell gave as good a definition of the Church as anyone, when he said:

The Church of Christ, upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians. (Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 1890, Vol. 1, pg. 258)

III. The Beginning of the Church

The first mention of the word Church in the Bible is Matthew 16:18, “... and upon this rock I will build my church...” By the use of the future

tense, Jesus clearly indicates that the Church had not yet been established. Jesus continues His thought regarding the Church when

He says to Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 18:18). The Church is also referred to as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:12; Col. 1:18). As the body, it is the fullness of Christ, who Himself fills all in all (Eph. 1:23).

The Church belongs to Christ also because He purchased it with His own precious blood. *References: Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18,19.*

IV. The Foundation of the Church

A divine church with a divine head needs also a divine foundation. Jesus said, “...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). Throughout scripture, Jesus is referred to as a rock. In Isaiah 28:16 God says, “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone of sure foundation...” (see 1Peter 2:6ff). Jesus is referred to as the stone that was cast aside by human builders but God made Him the head of the corner (Acts 4:11, 12). Paul settles the question of the foundation of the church when he says “other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Christ is the founder of the Church. He is the foundation.

V. The Government of the Church

Jesus Christ is the head and absolute authority of the Church. “And He put *all things* in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be head over *all things* to the church” (Eph. 1:22). This makes the church government an absolute monarchy. The local congregation has limited power of self-government.

- “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15).

- “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is *the head of the Church*, being Himself the Savior of the body” (Eph. 5:23).
- “And He is the head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence” (Col. 1:18;cf 2:10).
- As the supreme authority in the Church, Jesus has all power. And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18).
- As head of the church Christ has all legislative power. Christ has the power to enact laws to govern His Church and its activities.

(Don DeWelt, *The Church in the Bible*)

He has enacted the following laws and they are incorporated in the constitution:

- a. Qualification of citizenship. John 14:6; Mark 16:16
- b. Qualifications of officers of the kingdom. 1Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9
- c. Duties of citizens. Matt. 5:3 to 7:27; 1 Peter 2:21
- d. Duties of officers. 2Tim. 4:2; 1Peter 5:2; Acts 6:1-6
- e. Laws of finance. 1Cor. 9:1-13; 16:1-2; 1Tim. 5:17-18
- f. Laws of discipline. 1Cor. 5:1-13; 1Thess. 5:12; 1Tim. 5:20
- g. Laws for reinstatement of backsliders. Acts 8:18-24; 2Cor. 2:5-11

VI. Church Membership

Church membership means we have an obligation to make the church and its work first in our lives; it is an obligation to use our time and our talents for the glory of God – to support the work of the church with our presence, our influence and our means.

There should be an urgency within every church that every member be consecrated, trained, and enlisted in active service for we are

obligated to be the best member and Christian that we can under the leadership of God. To fully understand our obligation as members of the church of Jesus Christ, we must consult what is adhered to as the Church Covenant. Study it carefully, refer to it often, and seek to live by it daily.

Accountability of Church Membership: Accountability *means* voluntarily granting permission to a person or group to hold you to an agreed upon standard of conduct.

Biblical Basis for Accountability

1. *Believers are pictured in Scripture as being vitally connected to each other* (1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 2:21,22; 1 Peter 2:5; Gal. 6:10; 1 John 3:1).
2. *Believers are seen in Scripture as having a responsibility to each other. We are instructed to “love, serve, be tenderly affectionate to, honor, live in harmony with, confess faults to, bear burdens for, warn, pray for, look to the interests of . . . one another.”*
3. *The Bible both instructs us and illustrates the need not only for “tender love” but also for “tough love” (often when we speak of accountability, we are speaking about “tough love”).*
 - instructions to admonish (1 Thess. 5:12), speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), rebuke (Luke 17:3)
 - instructions to receive correction and rebuke (Prov. 15:31)
 - illustrations of tough love . . .
 - Paul and Peter (Gal. 2:11-14)
 - Peter and Ananias/Sapphira (Acts 5:3,4)
 - Nathan/David (2 Sam. 12:7)
4. The local church has been authorized by Christ to hold its members accountable for living “Christianly” (Matt. 18:15-18; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 4:2)

Members of the church place themselves under the accountability of the church to help them grow spiritually. This means involvement. Each new member selects their place of accountability in our church,

thereby granting permission to be held accountable for a lifestyle of Christian conduct, including . . .

- attendance and ministry involvement
- a testimony of integrity with both believers and nonbelievers
- personal spiritual growth
- godly relationships with spouse and children

QUESTIONS - THE CHURCH

DISCUSS

1. The church has many members; however, all are part of what? (Rom. 12:5) _____
2. In Colossians 1:24 what is the body of Christ? _____
3. What was the work of the deacons as recorded in Acts 6:1, 2?

4. What conditions were mentioned by Peter as he preached on the day of Pentecost? (Acts 2:38-41) _____
5. After repentance and remission of sin resulting in salvation, what is to be done in fulfillment of the command of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19? _____
6. What does Hebrews 10:25 say with regard to church attendance?

7. One can see the full significance of Jesus' command to His Apostles when in the great commission He said to go and teach and baptize, "Teaching them to observe _____."