

What the Bible Teaches About the Church

Definitions

I. English word “church”

- A. Anglo-Saxon “circe” or the Scotch “kirk”
- B. Both are derived from the Greek “kuriakos”
 - 1. Meaning: belonging to the Lord
 - 2. The adjective is found twice in the New Testament (I Corinthians 11:20; Revelation 1:10)
- C. In modern English usage, it is used to either refer to the people of the church or to the building of the church.
- D. This word, which developed ultimately from the Greek “kuriakos”, was originally an adjective and in Biblical use is not the word used for the church.

II. The Greek “ekklesia”

- A. This is the Greek word translated church in the New Testament
- B. Root meaning: “ek” - out of, and “kaleo” I call out, hence - to call out.
- C. In New Testament times, it did not mean, "the called out".
 - 1. It simply meant assembly
 - 2. In secular writings, "ekklesia" was used for town meetings, or any other assembly
 - 3. It never had reference to a building

III. Hebrew Background

- A. “Edhah” - Congregation, “qahal” - an assembly (nearly always referenced an assembly for the purpose of worship)
- B. In the Septuagint, ekklesia is often the translation for the Hebrew “qahal”

IV. New Testament Usage:

- A. When used of a body of believers, “ekklesia” is used in four senses:
 - 1. Matthew 16:18; I Corinthians 10:32 - The church Universal
 - 2. Acts 9:31 - Provincial
 - 3. Romans 16:1; I Corinthians 1:2 - Local
 - 4. Ephesians 5:25ff - Ideal

- B. First New Testament Appearances:
 - 1. 3 times in the Gospels: Matthew 16:18; twice in Matthew 18:17
 - 2. First undisputed reference in Acts is in 5:11
- C. “Ekklesia” never means the meeting place in the New Testament
 - 1. Early Christian met on Solomon’s porch (Acts 3:11; 5:12)
 - 2. Early Christian’s met in private homes (Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2)
 - 3. Always refers to a group of believer

Names Associated with the Church

Note the practical implications and application of each of these names and metaphors

I. Names for the church

- A. Matthew 16:18 - “My” church. The church belongs to Jesus
- B. There is no specific “title” by which the church was known. Most often, it was simply “the church” (ekklesia)
- C. The church is called:
 - 1. The church of God (I Corinthians 1:2)
 - 2. The churches of Christ (Romans 16:16)
 - 3. The church of the first born (Hebrews 12:23)
 - 4. The church of the Lord (Acts 20:28)
- D. Problem of “titles” - They tend to divide rather than unite

II. Names for the Members

- A. Believers - Acts 5:14
- B. Christians Acts 11:26
- C. Saints (Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:2)
- D. Brethren (Acts 21:17)
- E. Children of God (Phillipians 2:15)
- F. Disciples (Acts 6:1)
- G. Multitudes, or Congregation - Acts 15:30
- H. The Way - Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14
- I. The Sect of the Nazarenes - Acts 24:5 (probably from the idea that Jesus was called a Nazarene in Mat 2:23)
- J. The Sect everywhere spoken against - Acts 28:22
- K. Being named after men was forbidden (I Corinthians 1:11-15; 3:3-5)

III. Metaphors for the church

- A. A Body (I Corinthians 12:12-27)
 - 1. Christ is the head of the body (Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18)
 - 2. Christians are connected to each other intimately and to Christ
 - 3. A part separated from the body will die
- B. A Family, Household (I Timothy 3:15)
 - 1. God is the Father (Psalm 103:13)
 - 2. All Christians are brothers and sisters (Romans 8:16-17)
- C. Flock, or The Flock of God - Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2
 - 1. Individual members are also called Sheep, sheep need to be cared for.
 - 2. Elders are charged with Shepherding
 - 3. Note the Ultimate Shepherd in John 10:7-18; Psalm 23
- D. A Kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19)
 - 1. Jesus is the King with all authority (Matthew 28:18)
 - 2. We are all to be subject to the King, he is Lord (Acts 2:36)
 - 3. The Kingdom was prophesied (Daniel 2:44; Matt 3:1-4; 4:17; Mark 9:1)
 - 4. It was fulfilled at Pentecost (Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 2)
- E. Spiritual House - I Peter 2:4-10
 - 1. Spiritual House (made up of individual living stones)
 - 2. Holy Priesthood, also a Royal Priesthood (Priests - Revelation 1:6)
 - 3. A Chosen Race
 - 4. The People of God
 - 5. Notice the Basis: Jesus, the chief corner-stone
- F. The Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-32)
 - 1. Christ is the groom, the church is his bride
 - 2. Christ loves his bride, the church, and gave himself up for her
 - 3. We are to be responsible to him as a wife is to her husband
- G. Assembly of the First Born - Hebrews 12:18-24
 - 1. Mount Zion
 - 2. The city of the living God
 - 3. The Heavenly Jerusalem
 - 4. Myriads of Angels
 - 5. Assembly of the first-born ones
 - a. The word "first born" is plural
 - b. First born doesn't necessarily mean the first one born, but is a reference to position. A first born would have all the rights and privileges of an heir
 - c. First born, then, is a reference to Christians.
 - 6. Spirits of righteous Men made perfect
 - 7. Note the Basis: The sprinkled blood of Jesus
- H. Temple of God - I Corinthians 3:16-17
 - 1. Spirit of God dwells in the Temple
 - 2. Temple is Holy
 - 3. Note the Context, especially v. 11

- I. The Israel of God - Galatians 6:16; Romans 9:6-8, we are God's chosen now.

IV. Metaphors and Descriptions for its members

- A. A Disciple - Matthew 28:19; Acts 11:26
- B. A servant of Christ - Romans 6:15-18
- C. A Branch in the true vine, Jesus - John 15:1-7
- D. A soldier in the Army of Christ - 2 Timothy 2:3
- E. Aliens - I Peter 1:1; 2:11; Philippians 3:20
- F. Ambassadors - 2 Corinthians 5:18-20
- G. Light of the World - Matthew 5:14-15; Ephesians 5:8-9
- H. Salt of the Earth - Matthew 5:13; Colossians 4:5-6;
- I. Slave - I Corinthians 4:1-3; 9:19; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Romans 6
- J. Temple of the Holy Spirit - I Corinthians 6:18-19
- K. Vessels - I Thessalonians 4:4; 2 Timothy 2:20-21; 2 Corinthians 4:5-7

The Mission of the church

I. Fellowship and Unity

- A. Ephesians 4:3-4 - There is one Body (not many) that is to preserve unity
- B. Ephesians 2:11-22 - Christ's purpose was to unite us into one body growing together
- C. Galatians 3:26-28 - We are all one in Christ. The basis of unity is Christ
- D. Matthew 5:21-24 - You cannot be IN fellowship with God and OUT of fellowship with your brother and vice-versa. The two go hand in hand. If you break fellowship with one, you break fellowship with the other. Fellowship is very important.
- E. Fellowship can be broken. We are not to have fellowship with:
 - 1. I Corinthians 5:1-11 - Those who continue to live in immorality
 - 2. Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11 - Those who cause division
 - 3. II John 9-11; II Peter 2:11; Acts 20:28-30; Revelation 2:20 - False Teachers
 - 4. 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11-12, 14-15 - The unruly

II. Evangelism

- A. Note the Metaphors for the church and its members
- B. Ephesians 3:10 - The church is to glorify God
- C. One of the Greek words translated "I preach" is "euangelizo", from which we get our word Evangelize.

- D. 2 Timothy 2:24-26 - The Spirit of Evangelism
- E. John 17:14-19 - The Lord's Prayer
- F. Jude 17-23 - Evangelism in unfriendly territory
- G. The effectiveness of Evangelism
 - 1. Colossians 4:5-6
 - 2. John 13:34-35
- H. The Great Commission
 - 1. Matthew 28:18-20
 - 2. Mark 16:15-16
 - 3. Luke 24:46-47
 - 4. John 20:21
 - 5. Acts 1:8

III. Service/Ministry

- A. Note the Metaphors for the church and its members
- B. Service in General
 - 1. James 1:27
 - 2. Romans 12:20
- C. Service to the Brethren
 - 1. Galatians 5:13
 - 2. Galatians 6:10
 - 3. Matthew 25:34-44

IV. Edification and Spiritual Growth

- A. I Timothy 3:15 - The church is the "pillar and support of the truth"
- B. Edification - To build up
 - 1. I Corinthians 14:12, 26 - All things should be done for edification
 - 2. Ephesians 4:11-16
 - a. Equipping and Working together
 - b. Spiritual Growth
 - c. Being able to recognize sound and unsound doctrine and thus have solid spiritual anchors
 - d. Building up of the body in love
- C. Spiritual Growth
 - 1. 2 Peter 3:17-18
 - 2. Ephesians 4:11-16
 - 3. 2 Peter 1:3-8
 - 4. Hebrews 5:11-6:1a
 - 5. 2 Timothy 2:2
- D. Things that contribute to Spiritual Growth
 - 1. Hebrews 2:1-4
 - 2. Ephesians 6:10-17

3. 2 Peter 3:11-15
- E. Things that hinder spiritual Growth
 1. 1 Timothy 6:10, 17-19
 2. 2 Timothy 2:14-16, 22-23
 3. 2 Timothy 2:22-23
 4. 1 Corinthians 8; Romans 14:13-19

V. Financial Support and Benevolence

- A. 1 Corinthians 9:9-12, 14 - Preachers
- B. 1 Timothy 5:17-18 - Elders who work hard at preaching and teaching
- C. 1 Timothy 5:3-16 - Qualified widows
- D. Matthew 25:31-46 - The least of the brethren of Christ

Entrance into the Church

I. Membership Requirements

- A. Only those who are Christians can be members of the church
- B. This means that those who obey the Gospel can be members of the church
 1. Isaiah 59:1-2 - Sin causes a separation
 2. Romans 3:23 - All have sinned
 3. John 8:24 - Will die in sin if you don't believe in Jesus
 4. Matthew 16:13-16; John 1:1-3, 14 - Jesus was the son of God, was God, and was man
 5. 1 Timothy 2:5 - Because Jesus was a God and was man, he was able to become a mediator between God and man.
 6. Romans 1:16 - The Gospel (good news) has the Power to save you
 7. 2 Timothy 1:10 - Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality through the Gospel
 8. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 51-57 - The Gospel (good news) is that Jesus died for your sins, was buried and resurrected.
 9. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 - Those who do not obey the Gospel will be condemned. So the Gospel is not just a bunch of facts, but there is a call to obedience with it as well. The response to the Gospel includes:
 - a. John 3:16; Mark 16:15; Romans 10:9-10 - Belief, faith (In the Gospel)
 - b. Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19 - Repentance (It means a turning around, changing your life)
 - c. Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:35-39 - Confession (Confession of Jesus as Lord)

- d. Mark 16:15; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:1-4 - Baptism (Notice how the Gospel is graphically represented in Baptism - death, burial, resurrection - you rise to walk a new life!)
 - e. Acts 22:16; Romans 10:13- Call on His name (an expression use to denote service and worship to God)
 - f. Colossians 3:1-17 - A holy, dedicated life to God.
10. As a Christian, you have many blessings in Christ
- a. Ephesians 1:3-14
 - b. I John 2:1
 - c. Romans 8

II. Being a faithful Christian is synonymous with being a member of the church

- A. A person does not "join" the church
 - 1. Acts 2:47 - God adds the saved to the church
 - 2. Ephesians 2:13-16 - Jesus brought us together into one Body
 - 3. I Corinthians 10:13 - The Holy Spirit places us into the body. The Holy Spirit is received at conversion (Acts 2:38)
 - 4. When a person is saved, he is then a part of the body of Christ, the church
- B. Continued fellowship in the body is contingent on faithfulness
 - 1. Ephesians 5:11 - We are not to have fellowship with the unfruitful deeds of darkness
 - 2. I Corinthians 5:11 - We are not to associate with a brother living in sin

Denominations and Church divisions

I. Christ's church is to be one

- A. Matthew 16:18 - "I will build my church (singular)"
- B. John 17:20-21 - Jesus intent was for all his faithful followers to be one
- C. Ephesians 4:4 - There is only ONE body
- D. Philippians 1:27 - We are to stand in ONE spirit
- E. I Corinthians 1:10 - We are to all agree have have no divisions
- F. 2 Corinthians 13:11 - We are to be of one mind
- G. Titus 3:10 - A divisive man is to be rejected after two warnings

II. Acceptable divisions of the church spoken of in scripture:

- A. Provincial - Acts 9:31 2 Corinthians 8:2; Galatians 1:2
- B. City - Acts 8:1; 13:1; Romans 16:1; I Corinthians 1:2

- C. House - Romans 16:5; I Corinthians 16:19
- D. The only acceptable divisions mentioned in scripture are geographical

III. Unacceptable divisions spoken of in scripture

- A. I Corinthians 1:10-15 - Divisions after men (eg. "Lutheran, Mennonite, Wesleyan, Calvinist etc.)
- B. I Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28 - Due to race, gender, or social status
- C. 3 John 9-11 - Power politics
- D. Romans 14:3; Matthew 15:9 - Over matters of opinion

Simplified version of the cause for today's divisions

I. Creed's - Two ironies

- A. The ironic thing is that creedal statements were arrived at for the purpose of preserving orthodoxy, yet in the course of time, they promoted heresies
- B. The ironic thing of creedal statements during the Reformation is that they were often intended to unify by given a common statement of faith, but often the result was that the church split over disagreement with a creedal statement

II. A compromise

1. As the protestant reformation raged on, more and more division developed. The source a disagreements became so pronounced, that they often led to war, bloodshed, and even martyrdom
2. As a result of the ideas of liberty and free thinking which came as the result of the renaissance and the enlightenment, men began to accept the idea that people are free to choose their beliefs and not forcibly impose them on another person.
3. The concept of "denominationalism" began to take root. The church has many different branches, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Congregational.
4. In more recent times, some have even went so far as to use John 15:1-8 as a justification for denominationalism. Billy Graham popularized the notion that you are saved, then you must "join the church of your choice"

III. Even though Christendom accepted the idea of denominationalism, each with differing doctrines, this is not the picture Jesus painted for his church