

## What is The Church? Lesson 1 – The Nature of the Church

### Introduction:

- We want to see how the Scriptures answer the following questions:
  - What is the church?
  - How can we recognize a true church?
  - What are the purposes of the church?
  - What makes a church more or less pleasing to God?
  - What are the ordinances of the church?
- The word for “church” in the Greek New Testament means “\_\_\_\_\_.”
- The church is a \_\_\_\_\_ group of people that God has called out of the rest of the world through the Gospel to be His chosen people.
- The church is a group of people called out of the world and \_\_\_\_\_ together by God to worship Him.
- The church exists in the world today as the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus Christ who rules us as our Head.

***Col 1.18*** And ***he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.***

1. The church is the community of \_\_\_\_\_ true believers of all time.

A. The church is made up of all those who are truly saved in both the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Testaments.

***Eph 3.21*** to him be glory ***in the church*** and in Christ Jesus ***throughout all generations***, forever and ever. Amen.

- The sacrifice that Jesus made was \_\_\_\_\_ for all believers of all time, including those who lived before Jesus died on the cross.

***Heb 10.14*** For ***by a single offering*** he has perfected ***for all time*** those who are being sanctified.

***Heb 7.27*** He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this ***once for all*** when he offered up himself.

**Heb 10.10** *And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all.***

- Old Testament believers were saved the same way New Testament believers are saved, which is by grace through \_\_\_\_\_ in God's promised Messiah, Jesus.

**Rom 4.2–3** *For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. **3** For what does the Scripture say? "**Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.**"*

**Rom 4.6** *just as **David also** speaks of the blessing of the one to whom **God counts righteousness apart from works:***

**Heb 11.7** *By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and **became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.***

- Every person who trusts in God by faith, from Adam until Jesus returns, is part of the same spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ of believers.

**B.** Ever since the days of the Old Testament, God has always thought of His church as those whom He has called out and assembled together for the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_ from Him and \_\_\_\_\_ Him.

**Deut. 4.10b** *Gather the people to me, that I may let them **hear** My words, so that they may learn to **fear me** all the days that they live upon the earth.*

- The Old Testament refers to God's people as a \_\_\_\_\_, and the New Testament refers to God's people as a \_\_\_\_\_.

**Acts 7.38** *This is the one who was **in the congregation** in the wilderness with the angel who **spoke to him** at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us.*

**Heb. 2.12** *saying,*

*"I will tell of your name to my brothers;  
**in the midst of the congregation** I will sing your praise."*

- Old Testament believers stand as \_\_\_\_\_ to New Testament believers of God's promises, so it's only right to think of both of them as being part of God's great congregation, the church.

**Heb 12.1** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by **so great a cloud of witnesses**, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

- The language that refers to God's people in both the Old and New Testament is \_\_\_\_\_, because we're all part of the same spiritual body of believers, the church.

## 2. The church is both visible and invisible.

### A. The invisible church is the true church as \_\_\_\_\_ sees it.

**2 Tim. 2.19** *But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "**The Lord knows those who are his,**" and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."*

- Only God knows who is a true Christian and who is not, since only God can see the true spiritual condition of someone's \_\_\_\_\_.
- The true church is invisible to us since we can't know for \_\_\_\_\_ who is a true Christian and who is not.
- A person may attend church services, but they are not part of the true church unless they have been \_\_\_\_\_.
- We must distinguish between the church as an organization and the church as the \_\_\_\_\_ people of God.

### B. The visible church is the church as \_\_\_\_\_ see it.

- The visible church is the organized \_\_\_\_\_ of local churches.
- The visible church \_\_\_\_\_ all who profess faith in Christ and give evidence of that faith in their lives.
- Since we can't always know who is a true Christian, sometimes the visible church includes \_\_\_\_\_.

**Matt 7.15-16** *"Beware of false prophets, **who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.** 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"*

**Acts 20.29-31a** *I know that after my departure **fierce wolves** will come in among you, not sparing the flock; **30 and from among your own selves** will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. **31 Therefore be alert,***

### 3. The church is both local and universal.

- A local church is a gathering of believers in a particular \_\_\_\_\_.
- The universal church includes \_\_\_\_\_ believers in the world and in Heaven.

#### A. Christians that meet in a \_\_\_\_\_ can be called a local church.

***Rom 16.3-5a*** Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. 5 Greet also **the church in their house**.

***1 Cor. 16.19*** The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with **the church in their house**, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.

#### B. All the Christians in an entire \_\_\_\_\_ can be called the church.

***1 Cor. 1.2*** To the **church of God that is in Corinth**, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

***1 Thess. 1.1*** Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To **the church of the Thessalonians** in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

#### C. All the Christians in an entire \_\_\_\_\_ can be called the church.

***Acts 9.31*** So **the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria** had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

#### D. All the Christians in the entire \_\_\_\_\_ can be called the universal church.

***Eph. 5.25*** Husbands, love your wives, **as Christ loved the church** and gave himself up for her,

***1 Cor. 12.28*** And **God has appointed in the church** first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

- All Christians are part of the universal church, since the same Holy Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ us all.

***Eph 4.4-5*** There is **one body** and **one Spirit**—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 **one Lord, one faith, one baptism,** 6 **one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**

- The universal church is \_\_\_\_\_ in local assemblies of worshipping churches.

#### 4. Metaphors for the church.

- The metaphors used in the New Testament the church emphasize our \_\_\_\_\_, our shared life in Christ, and our fellowship through the Spirit.

##### A. The church is a spiritual \_\_\_\_\_.

***1 Tim 5.1-2*** Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

- God is our heavenly \_\_\_\_\_ and we are His children.

***Eph. 3.14*** For this reason I bow my knees before the **Father**,

***2 Cor 6.18*** and I will be a **father** to you, and you shall be **sons and daughters** to me, says the Lord Almighty.

- We are \_\_\_\_\_ and sisters with one another in God's family.

***Matt 12.49-50*** And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

##### B. The church is God's \_\_\_\_\_.

***Heb. 3.6*** but Christ is faithful over **God's house** as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

##### C. The church is the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.

Paul said that we have been **engaged** to Jesus and we're waiting for the wedding day in Heaven.

***2 Cor. 11.2*** For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as **a pure virgin to Christ**.

**Eph 5.25** *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,*

**Eph. 5.32** *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*

**D. The church is a \_\_\_\_\_ built on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.**

**1 Cor 3.16** *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*

**E. The church is the pillar and \_\_\_\_\_ of the truth**

**1 Tim. 3.15** *if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a **pillar and buttress of the truth.***

**F. The church is a holy and royal \_\_\_\_\_ offering spiritual sacrifices to God**

**1 Pet. 2.5** *you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a **holy priesthood**, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

**G. The church is a chosen \_\_\_\_\_ of new creatures in Christ.**

**2 Cor 5.17** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

**1 Pet 2.9** *But you are a **chosen race**, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

**H. The church is a holy \_\_\_\_\_ whose King is the eternal God.**

**1 Pet 2.9** *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a **holy nation**, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

**I. The church is a \_\_\_\_\_ led by Jesus as our Good Shepherd.**

**John 10.14-17** *I am the **good shepherd**. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be **one flock, one shepherd.***

J. The church is a \_\_\_\_\_ of which the Jesus Christ is the Head.

***Eph 5.23*** For the husband is the head of the wife even **as Christ is the head of the church, his body**, and is himself its Savior.

***1 Cor 12.12-13*** For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, **though many, are one body**, so it is with Christ. ***13*** For in one Spirit we were all **baptized into one body**

K. The church is like a set of \_\_\_\_\_ connected to Jesus Christ as the Vine.

***John 15.5*** I am the vine; **you are the branches**. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

L. The church is like a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_.

***1 Cor 3.6-9*** I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ***7*** So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ***8*** He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ***9*** For we are God's fellow workers. You are **God's field, God's building**.

Conclusion:

- The local, visible church is the local gatherings of Christians for worship, which sometimes includes false Christians.
- The universal, invisible church includes every true Christian that God has called out of the world and assembled together for His worship.
- The fact that the church is like a family should increase our \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ with one another.
- The thought that the church is like the bride of Christ should motivate us to be \_\_\_\_\_ to Him and to \_\_\_\_\_ ourselves to Him.
- The image of the church as branches in a vine should cause us to \_\_\_\_\_ in Him more fully.