

“The Church”
Basic Christianity: Class 15

Tonight’s Topic: The Church

Definition of the Church

“The church is the combined group of people (living and dead; past, present, and future) who are brought by God’s grace to saving faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. These people, the church, are called out from darkness, called out from the world, and called out from the bondage of sin; they are called together to worship Christ, learn from Christ, serve Christ, and live for Christ. In doing these things, they support a local church which represents the universal unseen church.”

A number of important aspects of the church embedded in this definition, include the following:

1. The church has both universal and local aspects, unseen and visible aspects.
2. People are in the church when they are saved.
3. Being in the church through regeneration, people need to join a local church manifesting their faith in Christ and their willingness to support Christ’s work and gospel in the community in which they reside.
4. Belonging to a local assembly of believers bears witness to their faith in Christ and their salvation in Christ.

A few further observations and characteristics of the church may be noted:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is Head of the church.
2. Every member in the church is a priest unto God through Christ.
3. The church must maintain biblical worship of God and Christ through the gospel.
4. The church must maintain holiness in reflection of God’s holiness.
5. The church must maintain love in reflection of God’s love for us in Christ.
6. The church must maintain the true gospel of Jesus Christ in proclamation and life.
7. The church is sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Aspects of the Church from Scripture

Church Built by Christ (Matthew 16:18)

“I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

Church and New Testament Metaphors of the Church:

- 1) Bride (Ephesians 5:25-26)
- 2) Body (1 Corinthians 12:13-18)
- 3) Salt (Matthew 5:13)
- 4) Light (Matthew 5:14-16)
- 5) Strangers and Exiles (1 Peter 2:11-12)
- 6) Family (Matthew 12:49-50; Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 5:1-2)
- 7) Soldiers (Ephesians 6:10-12)
- 8) Temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:5)

Church and the Holy Spirit (Pentecost, regeneration, sanctification)

1. The Holy Spirit formed the church (Acts 2).

2. The Holy Spirit indwells the church.
3. The Holy Spirit empowers the church.

Church and the Gospel

1. The church is a living testimony to the gospel.
2. The church preaches and teaches the gospel.
3. The church maintains the gospel.

Church and Training for Discipleship (Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Tim. 3:15)

Church and Doctrinal Belief resting on the Teaching of the Apostles in NT (Ephesians 2:20)

Church, the Temple of the Spirit, and the Presence of God (Eph. 2:22; 1 Cor. 3:16;
1 Peter 2:5)

Church and the Edification of Believers (1 Cor. 10:32; 14:26; Rom. 14:19; Eph. 4:11-12)

Jesus Died for the Church (Acts 20:28)

The Church and Accountability of Believers (Matthew 18:17)

Church and the Headship of Christ (Eph. 1:22)

Church and the Sovereign Glory of God to the World and All Entities (Eph. 3:10)

Sacrificial Ministry by Believers for the Church (Col. 1:24)

Church and Local Assemblies (1 Thess. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Hebrews 10:24-25)

Church and Believers Together as Family (Eph. 3:14-15; Gal. 6:10; 1 Peter 4:17)

Church and Believers as Citizens of God's Kingdom (Eph. 2:19)

Church as Christ's Flock (John 10:16; 1 Peter 5:2-3)

Church Body of Christ; Members of Christ's Body (Eph. 4:25; 5:30; Col. 3:15)

A Biblical Philosophy of the Church

1. Composition of the Church: Church composed of saved people
2. Organic Nature of the Church: Church is organic and alive, not organized and institutional
3. Worship and the Church: Church and public worship; church ordinances
4. The Church and the Bible: Church and the preaching and the teaching of the Bible
5. The Church and Prayer: Church and public prayer
6. The Church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ: Church and the maintenance of the gospel
7. Church and Self-Management: Church autonomy and local accountability
8. Church and Officers: pastors, elders, deacons
9. Church as Salt and Light: the church maintains the moral and doctrinal truth in history

The church must be seen in relation to Christ, the gospel, and God's saving work in believers. The church (on earth) is the outward visible manifestation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the saving work of God for God's glory in the world. Thus, the church is the body of believers gathered for worship, the study of God's Word, for prayer, and for Christian service and fellowship.

Questions:

1. Is a churchless Christianity a biblical Christianity?
 - 1) What is "churchless Christianity?"
 - 2) Why churchless Christianity is not biblical Christianity.

2. Should a Christian belong to a church?
 - 1) What does it mean to belong to a church?
 - 2) What does it mean to have a covenantal relationship to the church?

3. How do local churches magnify redemption and God's kingdom in the world?
 - 1) Support of gospel work at home and abroad
 - 2) Preaching and teaching the gospel
 - 3) Developing Christian leaders
 - 4) Starting and maintaining points of preaching and teaching the gospel