

Bible Studies Church

What is the Church? The obvious answer is **we are**, we are the Church. Most of us never ask the question in the first place. How we view the church is very important because it will effect our expectations and our actions.

The Greek word for Church is the word Ecclesia, (from which we get ecclesiastical) it means.

those called out
those called together
those called for

In Greek it spoke of a group of citizens called together, by a competent authority, for a specific purpose. In modern English the word *Assembly*, gives most of the meaning of Ecclesia. The Children of Israel are called the 'Ecclesia in desert'. *He was in the assembly in the desert, Acts 7:38*. God called the people out of Egypt, He called them together and He called them to be His special people. Ecclesia not only referred to the chosen group when they assembled, but also when they were apart.

**How does this definition of church apply to us?
Who called us together? What from? What for?**

To understand the church in this light is to realise our importance and significance. God called us together and we have a destiny.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9
Thirty times the NT refers to us as called.

Jesus said:

I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. Matthew 16:18

Three views of the Church

1

Historically The Roman Catholics saw the Church as an institution with a fixed hierarchy. Leaders, buildings, rules. It was the perfect society and contained within itself all it could need.

Do you agree with this view of the Church?

2

The Reformers (c1600, origin of the Protestant Church) were not happy with this view of the Church, instead they described it as the place where the Sacraments (Baptism & Communion) were administered and the Gospel correctly preached.

Is this view of the Church sufficient?

3

Today we see the church as the Community of God's people.

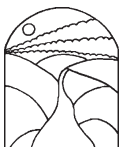
This community has two expressions; The **universal** (invisible) church believers from everywhere and every time. And the **local** (visible) church, a group of people who meet together in one place. (Like us for example)

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Our definition of the Church is **The community of God's people** Bearing this in mind which of the following is the Church.

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A denominational structure |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A central/local Administration. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A building |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Christians together in worship |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Believers scattered throughout the town during the week |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Me as an individual believer |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A missionary team |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A missions organisation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A youth group |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A home group |

The Church is...

Ephesians 1v22-23

1 Timothy 3v15

John 15v5

Ephesians 5v27

Acts 20v28

Ephesians 2v19

What do each of these metaphors tell us about the Church?

Is the Church best described as..

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | An institution |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | An Organisation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A living Organism |

Yes the church is an organisation and an institution, to deny it is to deny the obvious (we need structure) but it is not *primarily* an institution it is a living organism. All of the above list speak of life and growth, (with the exception of the last one but even then we are *called living stones, being built into a spiritual house* 1 Peter 2v5.) The Church is a living growing thing. The big danger comes when we concentrate on the structure and forget that we are a living entity.

Living entities grow and reproduce themselves, by definition that I part of what it means to be alive. If, as a church we have life, we will grow it is part of the nature of the church. If on the other hand we have only rigormortis....

Where does our life come from?

As a church what are the signs of life and death?

It is not enough to sit back and say "since we are alive we will grow so I don't have to do anything" we must also get rid of the things that inhibit our growth.

What does inhibit our growth?

Conclusion

It is not primarily what we do that makes us effective as a church it is what we are that is all important. All the outreach and witnessing in the world will do us no good if we do not have life. If on the otherhand we become what God wants us to be, our witness to the community will become natural and effective.

Do you agree?

Bible Studies

Church Goals



What is the Church for?

Jesus said “*J will build my church*”, He designed and commissioned it. It is not the invention of man but God. The Church belongs to it’s head, Christ Jesus. At the same time the NT has little in the way of a blue print for how the Church organises itself. It seems this has been largely left to us. This is good for it allows a great deal of flexibility, the Church is free to meet each culture and each age at it’s need. The danger in this is that we will mistake mans organisation for the body of Christ that it was intended to facilitate. That our structures obscure the real reasons for the Church’s existence and the goals it needs to meet.

Take a few minuets to think about these questions before you answer them.



What do you need from the church?



What does God require from the Church?



What does the World (the unsaved) need the Church to be?

The Church cannot be what everyone wants it to be. I have been accused of not covering certain areas in my preaching. The accusation was true, there are some things it is not my job to teach. Sometimes an unsaved person finds a social life in the Church (which is good) until he expects the church to meet his social needs and ignore his spiritual ones.

Does the church have to cater for everyone’s needs? (or wants?)

Who decides what needs the Church should meet?

What does the Church gain from being a community?

I believe that the Church has three fundamental goals;

*To cause believers to grow and mature
To see the unsaved come to a knowledge of Jesus
To Glorify God*

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25



What are the consequences if we give up meeting together;

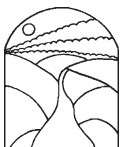
for ourselves?
for the Church?
for the unsaved?
for God?

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The early church defined it's function with three words

<i>Kerygma/Martureo</i>	<i>Proclamation of the Gospel/ be a witness</i>
<i>Diakonia</i>	<i>Service</i>
<i>Koinonia</i>	<i>Fellowship</i>

(Martureo which means witness, also means martyr).

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:15-16

What does it mean "each part doing it's work"?

Goals

John 15v8

Ephesians 3:21

1 Timothy 2v4

1 Peter 2v2

1 Peter 2:9

Ephesians 1v9-10

Colossians 1v20

Ephesians 3v10-

The first verses said the things you expected, but the last three point to something else that God is using the Church to achieve. He wants to reconcile all things to Himself, ie. Reverse the effects of the Fall. He also wants to prove to spiritual beings (both good and evil) that His dealings with mankind are true wisdom. Something that it appears Satan would contest.

God's purposes for the Church go beyond time and space.

Bible Studies

Light and Salt



Salt

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men."
Matthew 5:13

Salt was used for three things;

As a preservative

To season

To ratify (witness) an agreement

As Salt we are called to season, to give an example of Holiness in an unholy world. To preserve, to demonstrate a true set of values to a world that is fast drifting from even the idea that we should have values. And lastly to represent the truth.

Salt does its work silently but effectively. It speaks of an indirect approach to witness.

Witness by being who we are. Jesus used a similar illustration when He spoke of the Kingdom of God being like Yeast that works its way through the dough. Matthew 13:33

What does it mean for us to "loose our saltiness"?

How does this metaphor of salt apply to our witness?



Light

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16

Light speaks of revelation of the truth and of knowledge about God.

Light speaks of a more direct and open witness. Sharing the revelation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Letting people see who He is in us. Telling what we know and what He has done for us.

How do people see our light?

What does Jesus want us to do with the spiritual light we have received?

How does this metaphor of light apply to our witness?

"A light bulb does not have to think about how it will light up a room it just does it, that's its nature"

Which method is more effective, salt or light?

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:15

All of this demonstrates the prophetic nature of the Church. We are called to live and to show a way of life that is in direct contrast to the World.

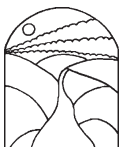
What do we mean when we say the church should be prophetic?

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A prophet is someone who speaks a message from God. The Church has a message from God to share.

What is this message?

Jesus said “*While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*” John 9:5 But now “*You are the light of the world*”. Matthew 5:14

We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20

This is an awesome responsibility.



Sheep among wolves

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Matthew 10:16

This was Jesus instruction to His disciples when He sent them ahead of Him to preach the Gospel.

What did Jesus mean when He told us to be a shrewd as snakes and as harmless as doves?

I think it means to be gentle, innocent and guileless but not to be naive or foolish.

What does it mean to be sheep among wolves?

Matthew 5v38-48 for some examples.

There are many answers to this, but I think Jesus is saying we must reject the worlds way of doing things in favour of a Divine way. When everyone else is happy being a wolf we are called to be sheep.

2 Corinthians 10v4

What are the worlds weapons, what are ours?

2 Corinthians 4v2

What methods did Paul renounce? Why?

“We are constantly on a stretch, if not a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organisations to advance the Church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel. This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man, or sink the man in the organisation. Men are God’s method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men.” E. M. Bounds

What does *The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men & Women* mean?

If we are to follow this vision of the Church, renouncing the worlds methods, being sheep among wolves what practical implications will it have for us?

Presence

Being who we are

Proclamation

Declaring the true

Persuasion

Leading people to the answer

Can we really effect the world we live in this way? If so How?

Bible Studies

The Kingdom and The Church

John the Baptist's message	<i>"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."</i> Matthew 3:2
Jesus' message	<i>"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."</i> Matthew 4:17
The disciple's message	<i>'The kingdom of heaven is near.'</i> Matthew 10:7
Philip's message	<i>he preached the good news of the kingdom of God</i> Acts 8:12
Paul's message	<i>I have gone about preaching the kingdom.</i> Acts 20:25

It is only recorded that Jesus used the word Church twice, in contrast he used the word kingdom almost every time He opened His mouth. While Paul uses the word Church more often, he also talks of the Kingdom frequently.

Why do we use the word kingdom so infrequently?

Many of Jesus Parables were told to explain what the kingdom was like.

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a..."

Matthew 13:24, 13:31, 13:33, 13:44, 13:45, 13:47, 13:52, 18:23, 20:1, 22:2

Are the kingdom of God and the Church the same thing?

You may have answered yes. And practically speaking for us here on earth the two are the same. But in fact the Kingdom of God is larger than the Church.

The Church is part of the kingdom,

The Church is the agent of the Kingdom.

We talk of being saved or becoming a Christian, Jesus spoke of entering the kingdom. **Is there a Difference?**

Can we still preach that the Kingdom of God is near?

There are many definitions of the Kingdom of God. I have a very simple one. ***The Kingdom of God is wherever Jesus Christ is ruling.*** It is the place where His will is done.



Some people get very confused about where the kingdom of God is, here or in heaven. And whether the Kingdom exists now or only in the future. (ie the millenium)

But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Matthew 12:28

I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." Matthew 16:28

Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' Luke 10:9

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17: 20-21

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. Luke 19:11

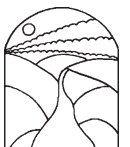
I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew

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with you in my Father's kingdom." Matthew 26:29

Even so, when you see these things happening, ... the kingdom of God is near. Luke 21:31

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." John 18:36

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. Matthew 25:34

Jesus taught that the Kingdom was current but also future, that it was here, but also from another place. Where ever Jesus is acknowledge as King, the Kingdom of God exists. The day will come when that Kingdom is universal. *"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."* Revelation 11v15

Kingdom Consciousness

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:32

And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, Luke 22:29

Christ has conferred on us a Kingdom. Kingdom consciousness is an awareness of ourselves as God's kingdom. It means taking up our destiny as the kingdom.

Firstly we are subjects of the Kingdom.



What responsibilities does this place on us?

Second we are agents of the Kingdom. In His wisdom God is using the Church to further His kingdom



Kingdom Priorities *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33*



Kingdom Obligation *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Matthew 7:21*



Kingdom Authority *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:19*



Kingdom Dedication *Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62*



Kingdom Prayer *your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10*



Kingdom distinctive *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, Romans 14:17*



Kingdom Power *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. 1 Corinthians 4:20*



Kingdom Morals *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 1 Corinthians 6:9*