

# Church 101

## Lesson 1

### The Church

#### PART I EXPLANATION

**Introduction:** Because there are many different conceptions of the church today, it is necessary to define the usage of the church in the Scriptures. The Scriptures use the word church in two distinct ways; to refer to both an organization and an organism. The names given throughout history to designate the difference between these two conceptions of the church are the visible church and the invisible church. Failure to clearly define and understand these two concepts is a cause of much controversy and confusion in Christian churches.

The organization of the church is an institution defined as a local, visible assembly of baptized believers **organized** to carry out the 'Great Commission.' The organism of the church is defined as a spiritual body composed of the elect of all ages with Christ as its Head. (Eph. 1:22-23) These are built into Christ at their effectual calling and will not be visible until it assembles in Heaven, which is a very necessary distinction. The primary disagreement that surrounds the doctrine of the church is to confuse the organization and the organism of the church. The main way this is done is to attempt to make the organism of the church an entity on earth which is unbiblical. This results in attempts to establish state churches and promote an ecumenical philosophy of uniting churches of all faiths. The Scriptures in no way support such a concept and it reveals a confusion of this subject.

However, in opposing such false teachings, many have come to deny the existence of the church as an organism altogether. While the primary usage of the word church in the Scriptures is in the organizational sense, it is also used frequently in the sense of an organism. It is used in much the same way as the kingdom of God is referred to in the Scriptures. The kingdom of God is both a visible entity that will appear following the return of Christ and a spiritual entity present in the lives of God's people. The context of the passage must determine which entity is used.

In order to have a proper understanding of the usage of the word church in the Scriptures it is necessary to understand both concepts. For example, Paul referred to the church "*which He hath purchased with His own blood*" and that "*Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.*" In these instances it is impossible to restrict the usage of the word church to the local, visible sense; for there is no one church alone for which He died. Neither is it possible to claim that He died for the institution of the church, for it clearly refers to the people for which He died.

Baptist's throughout history have not denied the organism of the church of which Christ is the Head. Some have referred to this as the 'glory church', the 'church triumphant', or the 'mystical church.' This is viewing the church in prospect when all of the elect will be gathered together in Heaven, at which time it will also be visible. Baptists have not denied that such a church exists; they just contend that it does not exist on earth. Baptist's have clearly and narrowly defined the concept of the church **on earth** as an organization.

There is a danger of confusing the usage of the church in the Scriptures in either direction. A primary division of the different denominations is how they define the usage of the word church in the Scriptures. It is essential to a right interpreting of the Scriptures and a balanced understanding to recognize the 'ekklesia' as both an 'organism' and an 'organization'.

**Definitions:** For English use the Webster's 1828 Dictionary and copy all appropriate definitions for each word. For the Greek and Hebrew use a Strong's Concordance and copy the definition. The Strong's number is in parenthesis.

English: **church** -

Greek: (1577) **ekklesia** *ek-klay-see'-ah* -

Hebrew: (4150) **moed** *mo-ade'* -

**Quotation**: “The English word ‘church’ is the translation of the Greek word ‘ekklesia’, which means “called out”. It was used of an assembly or congregation that might be called out for various purposes. The significance of this term as used in the New Testament is twofold: it refers to those who are called out from among the nations as a people for His name who constitute “the church, the body of Christ”; in this sense it is an organism. It also refers to those who are called out of any given community to carry out the principles and precepts of Christ found in the New Testament, as a body of Christians; in this sense it is an organization.” EH Bancroft

“Ekklesia - 1. Its ordinary use in the NT is to designate a specific, local assembly of Christians, organized for the maintenance of worship, the doctrines, the ordinances, and the discipline of the gospel, and united, under special covenant, with Christ and with one another.

2. It denotes the entire body of the elect in heaven and on earth - all who are embraced in the covenant of grace and who shall be gathered into the everlasting kingdom of Christ. Here the word is used figuratively, the name of a part designating the whole; and all redeemed souls are conceived as forming one grand assembly. Here the church is conceived as the bride of Christ, the Lamb’s wife, but not as the local church, for in this case innumerable brides will be presented to Christ at last - an image wholly incongruous. Plainly, the whole body of Christ’s redeemed is meant, conceived as when at last, fully perfected they shall be gathered in one glorious assembly and presented to Him - an image eminently natural and beautiful.

The following uses of the word ‘church’, though now common, are **not** found in the NT ekklesia:

1. *As the designation of a universal visible church.* No officers of such a church are designated, for the apostles’ office was plainly temporary, and expired with them. No provision is made for the assembling of such a church either actual or representative. No laws, ordinances, or discipline are given for such a church. All the elements, therefore, of such a body are lacking, nor is there any intimation of its existence.
2. *As the designation of a national or denominational church.* Different churches are expressly mentioned as existing in the same nation or district; as, “the churches of Judaea: We read nothing respecting a “diocese,” a “synod,” a “conference,” where many separate congregations compose one church; ... Plainly, ekklesia has nothing corresponding to the “Protestant Episcopal Church,” “The Methodist Episcopal Church,” “The Presbyterian Church,” when these titles designate a great national or district organization including in itself many distinct local congregations. Everywhere in Scripture a visible church is a local body.” Hezekiah Harvey

“For what we desire to impress upon the reader is that our Lord has given the word “Church” *two distinct meanings*; or rather, He has made that word the authorized designation of *two distinct but related objects*; the one, spiritual, heavenly, and eternal, the other natural, earthly and temporal; which diverse objects have this important feature in common, that *each is composed of redeemed people of God*. Our Lord has, as it were, set apart or sanctified that word for the special purpose of designating thereby those several objects and none other.” Philip Mauro

“John, beholding the revelation of last things, saw all those who will be saved, from Abel until Christ comes to earth. These will constitute the virgin bride.” JR Graves

“The General assembly, by all accounts, includes all the saved.” BH Carroll

“It is important to understand, then the meaning of the church. After the last man is saved, after the resurrection and the judgment, the anti-typical church then will consist of all the redeemed, from the beginning of the world to the end of the world. That will be the true temple of God. **That temple is in process of construction**, but will not be completed until the last man is saved, and will not be inhabited by the Holy Ghost as a temple until it is completed.”  
BH Carroll

“In an article entitled, “OT Saints: Members of the Church”

**The Error Stated** – An error of the opposite kind (than Jews despising and excluding Gentiles) has attained some notoriety in our day. The Gentile element is predominant almost to exclusiveness in the Christian Church. Occupying a place of privilege which our forefathers knew not, there have arisen among us certain brethren who stealthily at first, and afterwards more boldly, have disparaged the Jewish patriarchs, and vaunted for themselves a superior claim to the love of God, and a higher place in the destinies of heaven than they deem it possible for the saints of the pre-Christian era to inherit. Profane rivalry! Not more pretentious than unwarranted; not more audacious than unScriptural. Does the proposition admit of debate, or is it necessary to do more than refer every inquirer to the plain unequivocal testimony of the New Testament? So we thought at first, as our spiritual instincts revolted at the heresy....

**Difference of Dispensation** – From the tenor of the correspondence we have received, we infer that there are not a few such sincere believers in Christ, who have had their minds unhinged by the various tracts and publications which have been for the most part, anonymously put into circulation. Their question is, “In view of the various dispensations under which it has pleased God to gather an elect and faithful people out of the world, has it not been reserved to the Christian dispensation to furnish the privileged company, which in their unity, is called “the Church,” “the bride of Jesus,” “the Lamb’s wife?” We have already refuted this notion. Still, it appears that stumbling blocks have been laid in the path of those who diligently search the Scriptures, which, by the grace of God we will endeavor to remove....

**Only One Covenant of Grace** – Difference of dispensation does not involve a difference of Covenant; and it is according to the Covenant of Grace that all spiritual blessings are bestowed. So far as dispensations reach they indicate degrees of knowledge, degrees of privilege, and variety in the ordinances of worship. The unity of the faith is not affected by these, as we are taught in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The faithful of every age concur in looking for one city, and that city is identically the same with the New Jerusalem described in the Apocalypse as “a bride adorned for her husband.” Surely, beloved brethren, you ought not to stumble at the anachronism of comprising Abraham, David and others, in the fellowship of the Church! ...

**Where is the Church on Earth?** – Let the Plymouth Brethren define “the Church” from which, by injunction or consent of their leaders, Abraham, Moses, David, and others, “as individual servants,” are to be kept aloof. Their “plain papers” will tell us, “it is the actual living unity with Christ, and with each other of those who, since Christ’s Resurrection, are formed into this unity by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven.” Turn aside now and see this great sight. Where is it to be beheld? In the Ecumenical Church of Rome! In the Episcopal Church of England by law established! In the sections of Presbyterianism! Among the Methodist societies! Among the Congregationalists! Or is it, after all, among the Plymouth Brethren themselves, whose diversities and disunion are so notorious? We venture to suggest that the Church, which is the bride, has not her counterpart on this earth. While Christ, Who is our life, is absent, the life of the saints is hidden – hid with Christ in God. The New Jerusalem is out of sight, The Epiphany of the Church is a feast yet to be celebrated...

**Are we one with the Patriarchs?** -- Let us implore you to invert the question you have propounded to us. Those blessed patriarchs are undoubtedly heirs of the promises. Christ has acknowledged them. You need not ask whether they shall sit down with you, but your enquiry may well be whether you shall sit down with them in the kingdom of heaven.” CH Spurgeon

“In Ephesians 5:25-32 the church embraces the elect of all ages.” TP Simmons

**Confessions** (Look up and read these articles)

**New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith of 1833**

Article XIII A New Testament Church

**London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689**

Chapter 26 Of the Church - paragraphs 1-15

Chapter 27 Of the Communion of Saints - paragraphs 1-2

**PART II EXPLORATION**

**Key Questions** (*Answer in writing*)

1. What is the primary usage of the word church in the Bible?
2. What is the secondary usage of the word church?
3. When did the New Testament church begin?
4. Who is the Head of the church?
5. Give two words used as illustrations in the Bible for the church? (Hint: they start with 'b')
6. Explain what is meant by the church as an organism.
7. Explain what is meant by the church as an organization.
8. Explain the difference between the church as an organization and an organism.
9. In Ephesians 3 what is meant by the church being a mystery?

10. In chapter 26 paragraph 1 of the London confession who do they say the church is composed of?

**Key Scriptures:**

Matthew 16:18 Christ promises that He would \_\_\_\_\_ His church and that not even the gates of hell would stop Him.

I Corinthians 12:12-14 We are baptized by one \_\_\_\_\_ into the body of Christ.

Ephesians 1:22-23 Christ is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the body.

Ephesians 2:11-16 Christ has reconciled both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ into His one body who were formerly at enmity against each other and were forbidden from worshipping together.

Ephesians 2:20 The church that Christ is building has the \_\_\_\_\_ for a foundation and Christ as the \_\_\_\_\_.

Ephesians 2:21-22 The church is a holy \_\_\_\_\_ which God will make His eternal \_\_\_\_\_.

Ephesians 4:12-13 Christ gives gifts to the church for the \_\_\_\_\_ or erecting and building of the body of Christ until we come together as a \_\_\_\_\_ man grown into its Head.

Ephesians 5:32 The union of Christ to His body is a great \_\_\_\_\_.

Colossians 1:18 Christ is the head of the \_\_\_\_\_.

Colossians 1:24 Christ's body is the \_\_\_\_\_.

I Timothy 3:15 The church is also called the \_\_\_\_\_ of God and is to support and exalt the \_\_\_\_\_.

Revelation 21:2 John saw the church as a \_\_\_\_\_ called New Jerusalem and beautiful as a \_\_\_\_\_ speaking of her holiness.

Revelation 21:9 The bride is called the Lamb's \_\_\_\_\_.

**Key Chapter(s)** (*Read daily and summarize in your own words the meaning of the chapter*):

I Corinthians 12

**PART III EXPECTATION**

**Memory verse:** Ephesians 2:20

**Personal Definition:** (*Write a definition in your own words*)

Church -

**Personal Confession:** *(Study the confessions and write your confession in your own words)*

The Church

**Meditation question:** *(be prepared for discussion)*

In Matthew 16:18 who is the rock referring to and what church is being built?

**Extra Credit:** Explain the difference between the church as an organism and an organization and give two Scriptural uses of each.