

The Church



(Is this the Church?)

A study by
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T h e C h u r c h

a study by Dr. T.E. VanBuskirk

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PART ONE

The Church

What is it?



Introduction

The doctrine of the Church is probably one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented doctrines historically and even more so today. Many confuse it with “The Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven,” and others confuse it with the term, “Christendom.” So much is made of the larger terms, The Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven, and Christendom, that the world tends to make correspondingly little of the Church. So much is being made today of (so-called) Christianity that churchism, as those things pertaining to the Church is called, is put down as a consequence.

Religion and Church-

Today it is very common to hear, among the heathen and the Christian alike, “I don’t believe in organized religion.” The problem is, most people use this phrase as a synonym for, “I don’t believe in church.” Religion and Church are not synonymous terms in the Bible.

Religion- According to the Bible, religion is the outward trappings of our service to God.

**Jas 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this,
To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,
[and] to keep himself unspotted from the world.**

“*religion*” - , *thrace-ki-ah*, religious worship, esp. external, that which consists of ceremonies, religious discipline, religion

“*church*” - , *ek-la-see-ah*, a called out, baptized, body of believers.
(We will go more into this word a little later.)

**It’s obvious that these two words, religion
and church, are not synonymous as some think.**

To keep in mind the proper place of the Church, as compared to the seemingly loftier and larger Christendom and The Kingdoms, we must bear several facts in mind:

1. Jesus Christ positively identifies himself with the Church and not with Christendom.
(Acts 9:1-5)
2. He gave up His life to found the Church. (Eph 5:24-25)
3. God, in the person of Christ, shed His own blood for the Church.
Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.
4. Paul gave his life in service to build up the Church not Christendom.
(II Tim 2:10; II Cor 11:2, 23-28)
5. Paul speaks of his greatest sin as concerning his persecuting the Church of God.
(I Cor 15:9)
6. The supreme business of God in this age is the gathering of a people for Himself.
(Acts 15:13-17)
7. When the Church is finally complete, which will exist corporately only in Heaven
(Heb 12:22-23), then this age will be over and the Tribulation will begin.
(Jn 14:3; I Thess chs. 4 & 5; I Cor 15:35-54; et al)
8. The Holy Spirit working in the Church is what prevents evil from taking over.
(II Thess 2:6-7)

From these examples it is easy to see that God places the Church in a lofty position indeed. This then gives us pause to examine the common beliefs about the Kingdom and Christendom.

We must ask ourselves this question: During this age, are The Kingdom and Christendom in ascendance or is the Church in ascendance? To decide this we must first define the terms, Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven, and Christendom.

Christendom- This term is a secular term, not a biblical term; and it means those countries or those parts of the world professing Christianity. Thus in Christendom are many professors of Christ, but, no one knows how many are possessors of Christ.

The Kingdom of God- This kingdom was announced at Christ's first coming and will be set up at His return. It includes all things, visible and invisible.

(Ps 47:7; Ps 104; Mk 1:15)

- Believers are born into it at their new birth. (Jn 3:3-7)
- Believers are to be worthy of it. (II Thess 1:4-5)
- The unsaved cannot see (perceive) it. (Jn 3:3-5)
- Angels are part of it. (Ps 103-20-22)
- Satan and demons are answerable to it. (Is 24:21; Rev 20:1-3)
- Men are to seek it. (Mt 6:33)
- It is never identified with the Church in scripture.
- Nowhere in scripture are men told to build this Kingdom.

The Kingdom of Heaven- The term is found only in the book of Matthew, where it appears some 30 times. The Kingdom of God is also mentioned in Matthew, but only 5 times.

- Similarities between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God.

Kingdom of Heaven	Similarities between the two	Kingdom of God
<p>Mt 3:2 Mt 13:11 Mt 13:33</p>	<p>Both will be established on earth. Mysteries are associated with both. Christ associated the parable of the leaven with both of them.</p>	<p>Mk 1:15 Lk 8:10 Lk 13:21</p>

- We cannot, however, consider them to be the same kingdom because of certain striking differences between them.

Kingdom of God	Differences between the two	Kingdom of Heaven
<p>Jn 3:3, 5 Dan 4:2, 3; Heb 1:8 Jn 3:3, 5 Jn 5:24; 10:28-29</p>	<p>KOG is entered only by the new birth. KOH is not. KOG is eternal. KOH is not. Only the saved are in the KOG. Unsaved are found in the KOH. The saved are safe in the KOG. Unsaved will be cast out of the KOH.</p>	<p>Mt 5:20; 7:21 I Cor 15:24; Rev 20:6 Mt 13:47 Mt 13:41-43; 47-51</p>

We must consider the **Kingdom of Heaven** to be the rule of heaven over earth by Christ when He establishes His Kingdom on earth. **The Kingdom of God** is His sovereign rule in the universe, in both the spiritual and physical realms, and in the hearts of His people. (Ps 103:19)

The Church is different than both of these. **It is a called-out, baptized body of believers.** This distinguishes it from both Kingdoms. It is part of both, true, but it is not wholly either.

The definition of what the church is, the definition of the word itself, the Church's place, its institution, its membership, its ordinances, its vocation, its purpose, various other facts about it, and its eventual destiny, are the subjects grouped under the heading, "Ecclesiology." In short, "Ecclesiology," is simply the study of the Church.

PART ONE

T H E I D E A O F T H E C H U R C H

I. Definitions.

A. Old Testament use of the term.

1. Assembly. (Called- assemble together. **Lev 4:13**)
2. Israel. (Church in the wilderness. **Acts 7:38**)

B. New Testament use of the term.

NOTE: The Church is a New Testament institution.

There are two words used to denote the New Testament Church:

- *ec-le-see-ah* - to call out from. Translated Church(es) - 114 times.
The saints are the called out ones.
(**Mt 16:18, 18:17; I Cor 1:2; Eph 5:25, 27; Ro 8:30; I Cor 1:2 II Cor 6:17**)
- *kuri-akon'* - That which belongs to the Lord. (**I Cor 11:20; Rev 1:10**)
This term is used concerning the Church as in, "the Lord's supper." And also in connection with the Church's day of worship, "the Lord's day."

II. The Idea Of the Church.

A. The fundamental idea of the New Testament Church is plainly brought out in the Greek verb *kalein*, from the root word *ka-lay-o*, signifying to call, with its derivatives and compounds. When this is combined with the Gk word *ek*, which means, from or out of, then we derive the word, *ecclesia* (church) with the meaning of called out.

Derivatives and compounds of the verb *kalien*:

1. *kalein*. This Greek word, which means "to call" denotes the first act of Christ in point of time in connection with the Church.
(**Ro 8:30; I Cor 1:9; II Thess 2:14; I Pet 2:9**)
2. *kletoi*: This word, which means "the called," or "the invited," designates the members of the Church. (**Ro 1:6, 7; 8:28; I Cor 1:1-2; Jude :1**)
3. *klesis*. This word, which means "calling," denotes the peculiar vocation of the Church. (**Ro 11:29; I Cor 1:26; Eph 4:1, 4**)
4. *parakletos*. This word, which is commonly translated "comforter," designates the indwelling and informing Spirit in the *kletoi* (the called).
(**John 14:16, 17; Ro 8:9, 11; I Cor 3:16; Eph 2:22**)
5. *epi-kalein*. This word points out the distinct and distinguishing act of the *kletoi* - to call on Christ, i.e., to invoke Him in prayer.
(**I Cor 1:1, 2; Ro 10:9, 13; Acts 7:58, 59; 9:14, 21; 22:16**)
6. *para-kalein*. This word points out the act of the *kletoi* toward one another. Which is to call to, exhort, or strengthen in the faith.
(**Heb 3:13; 10:25; I Thess 3:2**)

7. *ec-le-see-ah*. This word designates the company, body, or organism of the *kletoi*, i.e. the Church. (Mt 16:18; 18:17)

B. One other word we need to understand, and the scriptures where it is used as concerning the Church, is the word, “baptize.”

Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added [unto them] about three thousand souls.

“baptized” - *e-bap-tidz-eth-san*, from *baptidzo*, meaning to immerse, to dip, in water.

C. The body of Christ.

In **I Cor 12:12-27** we are told that the local church, in this passage specifically the local church at Corinth, is the “**body of Christ.**”

D. When we combine the meanings of *kalein*, and its derivatives, with the scripture in Acts concerning baptism, then we come up with a definition for the word church, *ecclesia*:

1. The Church is a company of called out, baptized believers, which is the body of Christ. Or: “A called out, baptized, body of believers.”
2. They are called out from the world, indwelt by the Spirit, and have the special and peculiar ministry toward God of prayer and corporate worship, and toward one another of exhortation and consolation, and toward the world of being the vessel of the Gospel and the practitioner of authoritative baptism to those who receive the Word and are saved.^(16d)

III. The Two-fold Meaning of “The Church.”

There are two distinct usages of the Greek noun *ec-le-see-ah*, or Church, in the New Testament.

A. The Church Universal.

This is a Spiritual Body, composed of all believers of all ages who are united to God by faith in Jesus Christ. (**Eph 3:21; Heb 12:23**)

This church exists only in Heaven; and it will **not** exist on the earth until Christ brings it with Him when the Holy City, New Jerusalem descends from Heaven.

(**Heb 12:23; Rev ch. 21**)

B. The Church Local.

This is the physical manifestation of the Church. It is a visible body of baptized believers united to God by faith in Jesus Christ.

1. It is used of a small company in a house. (**Ro 16:5; Phi :2**)
2. It is used of the Christian congregation of a town or city. (**I Cor 1:2; I Thess 1:1**)
3. It is used of a group of churches in a country or nation. (**Gal 1:2**)

C. Christ spoke of the Church in its two-fold meaning; both the visible, physical manifestation of it, and the invisible, spiritual Church.

1. The spiritual, Universal Church. (**Mt 16:18**)
2. The visible, physical manifestation, known as the Local Church. (**Mt 18:17**)

D. It is important to remember that the invisible, spiritual, **Universal Church**, exists **only in Heaven** at this time. We believers will never see it on earth during this age; and neither will the unbelievers. We and they will, however, see it when it comes to earth- after the Tribulation time. And at that time, we believers will all come back with it, along with the redeemed of all ages who are all part of it.

IV. Clarification of the Word *Ekklisea*.

- A.** General meaning- an assembly. (**Acts 19:32, 39, 41**)
- B.** Specific meaning (most usage- 114 times)- Church.

V. The Members of the Church.

A. Must be saved. (**Acts 2:47, et al**)

Acts 2:47 “... **And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.**”

B. Must be scripturally baptized. (**Acts 2:41, et al**)

Acts 2:41 “**Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.**”

C. They are added specifically, by God, to a certain local Church.

1. The members of each local Church are the visible body of Christ in their area.

I Cor 12:27 “... **ye (the local Church at Corinth) are the body of Christ**”

2. The members are there because GOD has placed them there.

I Cor 12:18 “**But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.**”

3. Since God places them in that local Church, then they are to remain in that local Church until God moves them out.

D. “Should I leave my Church?”

1. Your Church is the body of Christ and you are a necessary member.

I Cor 12:20-27 “**But now [are they] many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those [members] of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely [parts] have more abundant comeliness. For our comely [parts] have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that [part] which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but [that] the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.**

a. The body needs every member; i.e., every member needs every other member in order to function properly. (:21)

b. The so-called “least” of the members are explicitly “**necessary**” to the wholeness of the body. (:22)

God has put the weaker (feeble) members in with the strong ones so that they can be cared for by the stronger members. (**I Cor 12:23-25**)

- c. We are to put the Church before ourselves and our petty disputings one with another. As a group we are to suffer when one suffers and we are to rejoice when one rejoices. Our personal petty differences, envy, and lusts, are to be put aside for the good of the whole. (:26)

Gal 5:25 - 6:2 “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

Gal 6:1-2 “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

If a member of our Local Church has a problem, then we aren't supposed to run them off, amputate a limb so to speak, but lift them up- EVEN IF THEIR PROBLEM IS WITH US- i.e., it doesn't matter if they have a problem with someone else or if it is with US- we are to LIFT THEM UP NOT BEAT THEM DOWN!!

Mt 18:21-22 “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times ? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven .”

- You don't immediately amputate an infected limb, you try to doctor it back to health. And if it has gone too far and has ganggreen, then it's not up to you to amputate it- it is something that affects the whole body so the whole body has to make that decision- and that is what is called Church discipline (**I Cor 5:4-5**); but it is not up to any one member. On an individual basis- you are to try to NURSE THAT SICK MEMBER BACK TO HEALTH- NOT TRY TO REMOVE IT FROM THE BODY!

REMEMBER - You may be the one with the sin infection next time and you're sure going to want someone to try to nurse you back to health instead of amputating you from the body!

- d. If we suffer with those who suffer, then we are to expect them to suffer with us when we suffer; and when we rejoice with those who rejoice then we will not only feel better in spite of our own less than desirable circumstances but we will also help keep them up so that when we feel down, they will be better able to help us up instead of making us feel lower because we have already brought them down.

Remember - “**ACTIONS PRECEDE FEELINGS.**”

Therefore, if we rejoice with them when we are actually down, then we WILL feel at least some better for the rejoicing.

Remember one more old adage - “**IT IS DIFFICULT TO SOAR LIKE AN EAGLE WHEN ONE IS SURROUNDED BY TURKEYS!**”

So if all the members are like eagles then the church won't seem like a flock of turkeys to the world that is watching us. And besides that, we'll all help keep one another up and soaring with the eagles - that's called “**edification**” which simply means building one another up instead of bringing each other down.

2. Then the answer to the question “should I leave my church” has to be “**no**,” not as long as your church is fundamentally sound in doctrine.
- a. When you leave a church, except through a sovereign act of God, then you cripple the church and you are out of the will of God. It is like amputating a part of the body.
Eph 4:16 “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”
 All of the parts are “**fitly joined together**” by God and when they all are involved in the “**effectual working in the measure of every part**” then to remove a part cripples the body of Christ and works toward its destruction.
- b. The local Church is the Temple of God and when you leave without being moved by God, who will always replace you with another part to make the temple/body whole, then are you not defiling the Temple of God by leaving it without a necessary part?
I Cor 3:16-17 “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which [temple] ye are.”
- c. The local Church is also portrayed in the New Testament as a family and a family has loyalty one member to another. We should exercise the same kind of loyalty to the local Church, which is our spiritual family into which the Lord has placed us, as we exercise toward our earthly family.
- i. Every member of a family is necessary for the family to properly grow, work, and help one another.
 Without the father and the mother, there is no leadership, nurture, and protection. Without the children, there is no future. Every member is important and necessary for the family to function to the fullest.
- ii. When one member leaves or dies, the family is never the same. In fact they have to suffer and seek until the family once again reaches some measure of stability; but, it will never be the same and will always suffer at the loss of any one member.
- iii. Without every member doing their part in an earthly family, then the family is dysfunctional. In a Church family, it is exactly the same.
- iv. As a part of that spiritual family, the local Church, the members are to remain loyal to that Church until the Lord moves them.
- Many, even those who have been loyal in the past, leave the Church when some kind of adversity comes into their lives. A job falls through, their company wants to move them to another town at higher wages or because they are no longer needed in their present position, trouble may come from other members of the Church, or in their neighborhood, the cost of living raises to high and it would be cheaper to live somewhere else, on and on without end. At the first sign of trouble- they bolt and run without ever really seeking God’s face in the matter.
 - Yet God promised to meet all of our needs. That is one of the great assurances of the Christian life- God’s provision- and yet Christians bolt and run whenever troubles come. No loyalty to the Church in which God had placed them and for which God

had shed His own blood. No loyalty - only fear and panic! And disloyalty to your Local Church is disloyalty to Christ- because it is His body.

- God promised to meet our needs, so we need to trust God and remain right where we are until God, in His sovereign will, moves us somewhere else. Is God in control or is your boss, or your family, or your bank, or the government that taxes you so high you feel you can't live right where you are?

- Make sure it is God that is moving you - or else just stay put and depend on His provision in your life.

When you are tried and tempted in your life- go to God with it, don't just cut and run.

I Pet 4:12 “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:”

I Cor 10:13 “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God [is] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear [it].”

Put the things of God first in your life- nothing else can be first- only God and His things and His Will. Serve God today and leave the future to Him. Do what you can to provide for yourself and your family, it is scriptural to do so, but DON'T WORRY yourself SICK about tomorrow! God is in control and when He puts you someplace, and that includes making you part of a local Church (which is His body and your Church family) then show some loyalty to God and His Church and stick it out when trials come! God WILL PROVIDE if you are in His Will. And loyalty to His Local Church where He has placed you is being in His Will for your life. God will provide!

Mt 6:24-34 “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, [shall he] not much more [clothe] you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;

and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day [is] the evil thereof.”

Phil 4:19 “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

- d. Many Christians have gotten themselves into such an expensive lifestyle that they become slaves to their lifestyle, and the money that it takes to maintain it, and cannot be faithful to God and His Church but have to move to higher paying positions, even if it keeps them out of Church or necessitates moving to another location for higher pay and abandoning the Church into which God had placed them.

Christ spoke of being enslaved to money and/or power and the things of this world rather than being a servant to God. (Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13)

Lk 16:13 “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon .”

SUMMARY -

- ▶ The local Church is the only kind of Church on this earth since the Universal Church exists only in Heaven and won't ever gather on this earth until Christ brings it back with Him.
- ▶ Christ puts us in a Local Church body as it pleases Him- and when we leave that body- except for the reason of fundamental doctrinal errors, then we are thwarting His pleasure; i.e., we are displeasing to Him. Unless we KNOW that He is moving us- then we are to stay put NO MATTER WHAT!
- ▶ The Local Church is Christ's body; and when we remove part of His body, us, then we cripple His body. If He moves us then He will replace that part so that the body won't be crippled- but if we just rip ourselves out of the body, then we are crippling His body.
- ▶ Since the Local church is His body, then when we are disloyal to it we are disloyal to him.
 - When we harm any part of His body- then we are harming Him.
 - When we malign any part of His body- then we are maligning Him.
- ▶ God is to be first and we are not to put anything above pleasing Him- not our job, riches, position, family, self, comfort, NOTHING is to be above God. And when He puts us in a Local Church body **“as it hath pleased Him”** then we are to be pleasing to God and trust Him to supply our needs RIGHT THERE and stay right there NO MATTER WHAT COMES until we KNOW that God is not just MOVING us but is REPLACING us because He needs us in a different body- a different Local Church!
- ▶ If each member stays in the body and each member of the body fulfills their function in the body, and even the lowest part of the body has a function if God put them there, then that body will succeed against the powers of darkness and every member will be properly nourished, protected, and fulfilled and functioning. And then will come to pass what Jesus promised:
- ▶ **“And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Mt 16:18)**

Class Instruction

Please return to the class page and take the test for Section One.