

deeper

word faith life

Season 4

The Doctrine of the Church
The Priesthood of Believers
The Mission of the Church
Church History
The Reformation
Calvinism and Arminianism

Acknowledgements:

Wayne Grudem

Rick Cornish



Episode 1 – The Doctrine of the Church

The Doctrine of the Church

This is often called Ecclesiology, or the Study of the Church. We get this term from the Greek word for church, [EKKLESIA].

What is The Church?

Let's have a look at the very first time the word "Church", or [EKKLESIA] is used in the New Testament. We find this in Jesus' statement to Peter in Matthew 16:18 - "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." [EKKLESIA] means "called out, an assembly, a gathering, or a congregation."

1 Peter 2:9 - "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."

The Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, translated around 300BC, uses the same word [EKKLESIA] for the assembly or gathering of God's people.

Deuteronomy 4:10 - "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children."

We derive the English word [CHURCH] from Old English [CIR(I)CE, CYR(I)CE], related to Dutch [KERK] and German [KIRCHE], based on the medieval Greek [KURIKON], from the Greek word [KURIAKON] "the Lord's (house)". [KURIOS] means "master or lord". Unfortunately many have come to understand the church merely to be a building, or a denomination; it carries so much more meaning than that. It refers to the people of God, the household of God, and the gathering of these people. As true believers, we are the church and we gather together or assemble in a building in His presence.

The Definition of the Church - The church is the community of all true believers for all of time. The understanding here is that the church is made up of all those who are truly saved, His "called out ones", from every generation that ever lived.

Ephesians 5:25

"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her"

The word "Church" applies to all those whom Christ died to redeem, the true believers. This must include all true believers for all of time, believers in the Old Testament era as well as believers in the New Testament era. God has always called people to Himself, to be a worshiping assembly or gathering before Him.

Acts 7:38 - "He was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai..." Stephen speaks here of the "Church", the [EKKLESIA], in the wilderness.

The writer to the Hebrews quotes Christ as saying that He would sing praise to God in the midst of God's people in heaven. (Hebrews 2:12 quoting Psalm 22:22) In Hebrews 12:1 the author also states that the present day Christians who constitute the church on earth, to be "surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses". This great cloud of witnesses reaches way back into the Old Testament and includes people such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, David, and the prophets. In fact all those who truly belong to God. (Hebrews 11:4-32)

The New Testament authors see Jewish and Gentile believers as being united in the church, "Who has made the two groups one" (Ephesians 2:14), they are now "one new humanity" (verse 15), and "fellow citizens" and "members of His household" (verse 19).

It is right and fitting that we understand the church as consisting of all the people of God for all time, both Old Testament and New Testament believers. And, from God's perspective, even those who are yet to come to Christ, repent of their sin and be born



again. That is what we mean by the church.

The Nature of the Church

The church is Visible and Invisible, and it is Local and Universal at the same time:

The _____ church is the church as God sees it - We cannot see into a person's heart to determine their true spiritual state, only God can do that.

1 Timothy 2:19 - "The Lord knows those who are His,"

Only God knows who belongs to Him with certainty and without error. We can see the outward evidence of an inward spiritual condition, but only God truly knows. And as we have stated earlier, the church is made up of those who are no longer with us in our day and age. The church is said to be invisible.

The _____ church is the church as believers on earth see it - It includes all those who profess faith in Christ and demonstrate the evidence of that faith in their daily lives. In the New Testament, Paul's epistles are written to the visible churches in specific geographical locations. He would have definitely been aware of the fact that there would have been some unbelievers in those churches. People who seem to have made profession of faith in Christ, but were not genuine, those who appeared to be believers but who would eventually fall away. We experience this today. The visible church is that group of people who gather each week as congregations to worship as a church and profess faith in Christ. Throughout the world, the visible church will always include some unbelievers. We should always be open to the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all people, drawing them to Himself.

The Local church is the group of believers who gather for worship in a geographical location. Some gatherings meet in large buildings, and other smaller churches meet in people's homes. These are all legitimate uses for the word church and are local by nature.

The Universal church, not to be confused with the cult of the same name, is the church throughout the entire world. All true believers belong to this universal church.

We should not think that only a house church expresses the true nature of the church, or that only a city-wide church can be called a church. Nor should we think of the universal church as having the only claim to the word church. The community of God's people, at any level, can rightly be called the church.

Biblical Descriptions of the Church

_____ - The members of the church relate to each other as members of a large family do.

1 Timothy 5:1,2 - "Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity."

The relationship between Christ and the church are also seen in familial terms, Christ being the groom and the church His bride. (Ephesians 5:32)

_____ - The members of the church are like different parts of the body. Members have their own functions and responsibilities just like parts of our anatomy do. (1 Corinthians 12) The church is referred to as the body of Christ with Him as the head, holding it all together and equipping every part to work as it should. (Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:15-16, Colossians 2:19)

_____ - Where God chooses to presence Himself and to reach out to a lost humanity.



(1 Peter 2:4-8)

_____ - Each member of the church has a function in the expression of this new temple.(1 Peter 2:5)

_____ - We have been grafted in to the olive tree that is Israel.(Romans 11:17-24)

_____ - The life of God flows through the church as the sap of the vine flows through to the branches, making them fruitful.(John 15:5)

Field of crops - A field that is productive and yields a harvest.(1 Corinthians 3:6-9)

None of these are meant to completely define the church, but rather, each of these metaphors are used to emphasise a different perspective of the church, to give us a richer understanding of the community to which God has joined us.

The Church and the Kingdom of God

George Ladd, in his work, A Theology of the New Testament, says the following:

“The church is the community of the Kingdom but never the Kingdom itself. Jesus’ disciples belong to the Kingdom as the Kingdom belongs to them; but they are not the Kingdom. The Kingdom is the rule of God; the church is the society of men.”

There is a close connection between the church and the Kingdom of God. As the church proclaims the good news of the Kingdom, people will come into the Church and experience the life changing blessing of God’s rule in their hearts. The Kingdom manifests itself through the church, allowing the future reign of God to break into the present; it is already here, and not yet here. The church will experience some of the future Kingdom splashing into the present, and eventually Jesus will return and His Kingdom reign will extend over all creation.

The Church is _____ the Kingdom - Jesus draws that distinction when He preached that the Kingdom was at hand, not the church is at hand. He preached the good news of the Kingdom, not the good news of the church.

The Kingdom _____ the Church - As people enter the Kingdom, come under God’s rule, they become joined to the human fellowship of the church.

The Church _____ to the Kingdom - Jesus said that the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world.(Matthew 24:14)

The Church is the _____ of the Kingdom - The Holy Spirit, manifesting the power of the Kingdom, works through believers to heal the sick, open blind eyes, cast out demons and set the captives free.(Matthew 10:8, Isaiah 61:1)

The Church is the _____ of the Kingdom - The Church has been given the keys of the Kingdom.(Matthew 16:19)

Memory Verse

Matthew 16:18

“and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

