

# The Church

## The body of Christ, the community of all believers

The church constitutes God's new covenant community, comprised of all who have been redeemed by Christ's blood and regenerated by His Spirit. The Greek word *ekklesia* means "called out ones"—those whom God has summoned from darkness into His marvelous light. The church exists both universally (all believers everywhere) and locally (visible congregations in specific places).

Scripture employs rich metaphors to describe the church. It is **Christ's body**, with Jesus as Head and believers as interdependent members (1 Corinthians 12). It is **God's temple**, a spiritual house where the Holy Spirit dwells (Ephesians 2:21-22). It is **Christ's bride**, loved and purified by Him for presentation in splendor (Ephesians 5:25-27). It is **God's family**, with believers as brothers and sisters adopted by the Father (Galatians 3:26).

Christ established the church and promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). He gave the church its ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper), its mission (making disciples of all nations), its leaders (pastors, elders, deacons), and its spiritual gifts for mutual edification. The church is not a human organization but a divine organism, though it takes organizational form in local expressions.

Active participation in a local church is not optional for believers. Scripture commands us not to forsake assembling together (Hebrews 10:25) and describes Christians using one another to build up the body. Isolated Christianity contradicts biblical Christianity. The church, with all its imperfections, remains God's primary instrument for evangelism, discipleship, and displaying His glory to the world.

## Body of Christ

### The church as Christ's body

**1 Corinthians 12:27** — Ye are the body of Christ

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

**Ephesians 1:22-23** — Church, which is his body

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

**Colossians 1:18** — Head of the body, the church

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

**Romans 12:5** — One body in Christ

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

## Gathering Together

The importance of assembly

**Hebrews 10:25** — Not forsaking the assembling

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

**Matthew 18:20** — Where two or three are gathered

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

**Acts 2:42** — Continued steadfastly in fellowship

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

**1 Corinthians 14:26** — When ye come together

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

## Christ's Love for the Church

Jesus' devotion to His bride

**Ephesians 5:25** — Christ loved the church

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

**Acts 20:28** — Purchased with his own blood

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.

**Ephesians 5:27** — Present it to himself glorious

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

**Matthew 16:18** — I will build my church

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

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