

# The Church – Part 1 - What is the church and who is in control? | 7/15/18

- Introduction
  - This will be a series on the church and what it truly means.
  - The church was established by Christ and it's important that we have a proper understanding of what it is (and isn't) along with what God expects from us.
  - Today we will answer the question "what is the church?" and also establish who is truly in control.
  - In upcoming lessons, we will focus on specific aspects about the church and its responsibilities.
    - Core functions of the Church
    - Evangelize to grow the kingdom of God
    - Unity and participation in the church
    - Spiritual gifts
    - Teach, Preach and study God's Word
    - Etc.
- What is the church?
  - This is an interesting question and at first, we might think that the answer is simple and straightforward.
  - But if we look at the world today we see that this is not so easily answered by simply surveying the modern-day church across the world as they seem to look different from one another.
    - The church today is quite fragmented with numerous denominations which all seem to have different beliefs.

Christian	70.6%	Non-Christian Faiths	5.9%
▶ Evangelical Protestant	25.4%	Jewish	1.9%
▶ Mainline Protestant	14.7%	Muslim	0.9%
▶ Historically Black Protestant	6.5%	Buddhist	0.7%
Catholic	20.8%	Hindu	0.7%
▶ Mormon	1.6%	Other World Religions	0.3%
▶ Orthodox Christian	0.5%	▶ Other Faiths	1.5%
Jehovah's Witness	0.8%	Unaffiliated (religious "nones")	22.8%
▶ Other Christian	0.4%	Atheist	3.1%
		Agnostic	4.0%
		▶ Nothing in particular	15.8%
		Don't know	0.6%

Pew Research 2014 - <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>

- **When we examine the Christian Church from the Scriptures, we find that there were no major divisions or denominations.**
  - They were all Christians who were part of the same universal church.
  - This is of course quite different than what we know today.
  - **When we say "church" today the true implication of what that means is different depending on who you ask.**
  - **If you surveyed 5 random people "what is the church" what might be their responses?**

- Some see it as a physical building that is “holy”, some see it as a group of people who do good for others, some see it as a non-profit organization to save money on taxes, some see it as a social club, some see it as a religious organization, while others see it as a body of believers who come together to worship God and fulfill His purposes.
  - What then is the biblical meaning of the word “church”?
    - **Today if someone says, “Where is your church?”** the common answer is the church name or physical location. Because people equate “church” to a building or place of worship.
    - **In the Bible the Greek word for the New Testament church is “ekklesia” which means “those called out” or an “assembly”.**
      - **When applying this to Christians it is those who are true believers that gather together. It is the people.**
    - So “church” is not the physical building, but it is a group of true Christian believers who gather together for the purposes of God.
    - **There is a Universal or Invisible church.**
      - **All Christians regardless of their denomination or the name on their church building are part of the universal or invisible church.**
      - It is invisible because only God knows its boundaries, only God knows who the true members are.
        - 2 Timothy 2:19a
          - “But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: **The Lord knows** those who are his,”
      - A true Christian can be a member of the universal church but not necessarily be associated with a specific local congregation.
      - We are saved by God’s grace through faith, NOT our church membership.
    - **There is a local church**
      - This local church is of course what we commonly think of as “our church”, it is the place that we congregated with other believers to worship God.
      - The local church can be made up of true Christians (part of the universal church) and those who are lost.
      - The local church is of course biblical and was established by Christ.
      - It is very important for Christians to attend and participate.
      - A local church can be of any size, even one in the home.
        - Philemon 2
          - “and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:”
        - Colossians 4:15
          - “Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.”
- **If the church is the body of believers, then what is there purpose?**
  - There are many responsibilities for the church which we will get to, but there is one purpose that serves as the root or pillar to why Christ established it.
  - **Christ established the church so that His truth might be made known to the world.**
  - Ephesians 3:8-11
    - To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all

things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he was realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,”

- **This is the core purpose of the church, to make known to the world the truth of Christ to continue the work that Christ had initially given to His disciples.**
  - This is the purpose for the church to continue the work that God had given to His disciples, to show the world who Jesus is and the truths He gave us.
  - The disciples were not going to be around forever, the church was to pick up these duties.
  - **This work is of course extensive, and we will get into more of what the specifics are.**
- **If we look at the world today, we can see that in many cases it has lost track of what the true purpose of the church is.**
  - I wish that all churches would perfectly follow to what God desires, but we know this is not the case.
  - Many have lost (or never knew) the purpose of the TRUE church according to Scripture.
    - **This of course does not mean that we have to look exactly like the NT church in every way like getting read of guitars and electricity 😊.**
    - The church can have programs and do ministries that were not done in the Scriptures so long as it never loses sight of the primary mission.
- **What are some examples or signs where a church has lost sight of this core reason as for the purpose of the church?**
- **What can lead a church down this path?**
- **What are the negative impacts when churches lose sight of their primary responsibility?**
- Christ is the head of the Church and its members are the body.
  - **For a church to truly be of God and produce good fruit, it MUST have a correct understanding of the spiritual structure of the church.**
  - It is all too often today that people put a person as the face or head of a church.
    - It might be a popular pastor that has a huge following, and everyone looks up to him.
      - This is OK of course, but if people see this man as the real “head” of the church this is a problem.
    - **It could be the deacons, committees, elders, councils or in the case of the Catholic Church the Pope.**
  - **A church (including its leaders and members) must see Jesus Christ as the absolute head of the church.**
    - This is not something that can be up for debate, Scripture is very clear on this.
      - Ephesians 1:22-23
        - “And he put all things under his feet and gave him as **head over all things to the church, which is his body**, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”
      - Colossians 1:18a
        - “And **he is the head of the body, the church...**”
      - Ephesians 5:23
        - “For the husband is the head of the wife even as **Christ is the head of the church, his body**, and is himself its Savior.”
    - **To see Christ as the head means we must put our desires and passions aside and be certain that everything we (the church) does is according to the will of God.**

- Psalm 143:10
  - **“Teach me to do your will**, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!”
- John 5:30 (Jesus submitting to the Father)
  - “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because **I seek not my own will but the will of him** who sent me.”
- Luke 22:42b (Jesus submitting to the Father)
  - “...Nevertheless, **not my will, but yours**, be done.”
- **The church must be submissive.**
  - Ephesians 5:24
    - **“Now as the church submits to Christ**, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.”
  - The church must always submit themselves to Gods’ will, to go wherever He is leading them, to do whatever it is He has called.
- While Christ is the head, the members of the church serve an important role as the body.
  - **If Christ is the head are we then mindless drones? No, we server a vital role as being members of the body of Christ.**
  - We are His hands and feet.
    - Ephesians 1:22-23
      - “And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things **to the church, which is his body**, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”
    - 1 Corinthians 12:27
      - “Now **you are the body of Christ** and individually members of it”
    - Romans 12:5
      - “so we, though many, **are one body in Christ**, and individually members one of another.”
    - Colossians 1:24
      - “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of **his body, that is, the church.**”
  - **For Christians and the church to see themselves as the body is a vital understanding.**
    - It is not us who make decisions and choose how to serve God.
    - It is God who directs and guides us on our decisions and how to serve, we are to be obedient.
    - We are to submit to His perfect guidance and will for our lives.
    - **It is only under these circumstances that we will truly be effective for Christ.**
      - Just because WE think something would benefit and grow the kingdom of God, doesn’t mean it’s something that He wants, good or not.
      - **It is possible for the church to get involved in things that are “good” but may not be in God’s will.**
      - It is the church acting on the desires of God, not on the desires of man.
      - **Do you think at times the church does things that are “good” yet it was not a directive given by Christ?**
  - **With Christ as the head and the body “working properly” the kingdom of God will grow.**
    - The results of the church who sees Christ as its head and obey Him will add to the Kingdom of God and they will also grow spiritually
    - **The key here of course is when each part is “working properly”.**

