

unity of His people, His church, as they would exist in the world through the coming ages. He prayed that they would worship together in spirit and truth, remembering Him in the communion supper each first day of the week (John 4:24; Acts 20:7).

To help humans understand more fully what the church is, in the Scriptures the Holy Spirit likened it to several things.

✿ It is called the “body” of Christ; that is, the spiritual body of Christ. Thinking of our human bodies and heads, we can see the parallel and can understand how we are to work together with Christ, as He directs His body (Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 4:4). We can also understand that the Scriptures portray only one church, united in doctrine and fellowship, just as each “head” has only one “body”, and that body explicitly obeys the directions of the head.

✿ The church is pictured as the “house” of God (1 Timothy 3:15), that is, the spiritual household or family that belongs to God. We would not approve of a man in this world having several families and being a polygamist. When people say that all the de-nominational churches are Christ’s families, the are accusing Him of polygamy.

✿ The church is compared to sheep in a sheepfold, the place of safety, with Jesus being the Good Shepherd who died to save His sheep (John 10).

✿ Another likeness is given, with Jesus being called the vine and Christians identified as branches that are to bear fruit to God (John 15:1-11).

The church is not a denomination or a group of denominations. Neither is it the Catholic church or any other man-made institution. It is not a church building. Rather, it is the family of God that has been called out of the world. It is the saved, the spiritual body of Christ on earth, the church for which He died.

Are you a member of the Lord’s church, the one true church of the Bible, the one and only church bought by Jesus’ blood, the one for which He will return one day? If not, we pray

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# What Is the Church?

**J.C. Choate**



## What Is the Church?

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We know that there are many “churches” in the world. All claim to be of God, naturally. And yet there are some strange ideas concerning what the church actually is. Many define it as a *building* where the people come together for worship. Others think of it as being a *denomination*. Still others would say the church is made up of *all the denominations* as a spiritual body of people, ignoring the many differences in name and doctrine.

If we want to understand what the church really is, we need to go back to the New Testament for our answer. The word “church” comes from the Greek word “ekklesia”, which means “the called out”. The idea is that the Lord calls people out of the world, into one group or body, and that they become His people. They are called by the gospel, to believe that Jesus died for them, that He was buried, and that on the third day He was resurrected from the grave (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Christ had said that the Gospel should be taken into all the world, and that those who believed it and would be baptized would be saved from their sins (Mark 16:15,16). The Lord Himself adds those who are

being saved to the church (Acts 2:47).

Before His death, Christ had promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). It was first established in the city of Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles and they preached the good news of Christ to the great crowd that had gathered. This was on the first Pentecost after Jesus’ resurrection, approximately 33 A.D.

The apostles, having received the promised power of the Holy Spirit, were guided to tell the people about Christ, how He had lived among men, doing good, but that they had taken Him and with wicked hands they had crucified the very Son of God! God, though, had not left Him in the grave but had raised Him up, and Jesus had returned to heaven to reign at the right hand of the Father. At the end of this sermon, many were convinced and cried out, asking what they should do. They were told that they must repent of their sins and be baptized for the forgiveness of those sins. They would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38,40), and the Lord would add to the church those who were being saved.

This is the first mention in the Scriptures of the church as being in existence, and of people being added to the church. As we continue to read through the book of Acts, we see that the

Gospel was preached again and again in that area, in the neighboring countries, and that it spread from there to reach the world.

Christ established only one church (Ephesians 4:4) and that church, being made up of the saved, exists even now throughout the world. It also exists locally in the form of congregations (Romans 16:16), but all of them together make up the one church, the church of Christ.

- ✳ Christ is the authority, or head, over His church (Colossians 1:18).
- ✳ Christ is the savior of His church (Ephesians 5:23), because the redemption price He paid for it was His life’s blood.
- ✳ Christ is the foundation on which His church is built (1 Corinthians 3:11).
- ✳ Christ’s name is worn by His church, because it is called His bride (Romans 16:16; Ephesians 5:25-32). Its members, individually are called by His name, “Christian”, Christ-like (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16).
- ✳ Christ has promised that He will come back one day to receive His church and to deliver it up to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24).

While in this world, Christ prayed for the