

What Exactly is The Church

Lesson 3

By: John Isaac Edwards

Contact Information
Dave Scarpino – Evangelist
512 Columbus Street
Bedford, Ohio 44146
440-232-2231

In the midst of so many religious bodies teaching conflicting doctrines, one finds himself with the difficult task of locating the true church

We can easily locate the right church by examining the distinctly identifiable marks of the Lord's church which are revealed in the New Testament. With a little diligence and time one can with certainty find the one true church today which Christ's blood bought and paid for.

I. Salvation and the Church

- A. We see the importance of the church, when we realize that salvation and the church are inseparable. One cannot be saved outside of the church. Jesus is the "..._____ of the body" (Ephesians 5:23) "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being _____ (Acts 2:47)
- B. To be in the church is the same as being in Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23), which is where salvation is (2 Timothy 2:10)

II. Some Things the Church is Not

- A. Sometimes we can better understand what a thing is if we first know what it is not.
 - 1. **The church is not a material building:** "*God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with _____*" (Acts 17:24). What was it that came upon the church in Acts 5:11?

The church is a group of men and women who have believed the word of God and have obeyed God's plan of salvation, "Christians": Not a physical building.
 - 2. **The church is not a social club:** "*for the kingdom of God is not _____ and _____, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 14:17). It is not the business of the church to be involved in social affairs, such as providing entertainment and recreation.
 - 3. **The church is not a denomination:** The church of the Lord is not a part of anything, as "denomination" implies. The church of the Bible is a "nondenominational" body.
- B. Now that we know what the church is not, let's notice some things the Bible teaches about what the church is.

III. Bible Teaching about the Church

- A. **The church was planned by God:** "*to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the _____ purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Ephesians 3:10-11) The church was in the eternal purpose of God.
The church was not just an afterthought or result of time circumstance, but it was planned by God from the beginning.
- B. **The church was predicted in the Old Testament:** The prophets of the Old Testament predicted that the church would be established. One outstanding prophecy is that of Isaiah 2:2-3. "2 Now it shall come to pass in the _____ days that the mountain of the Lord's _____ shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and _____ shall flow to it. 3 Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; **He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.**' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

- C. **The church is revealed in the New Testament:** The prophecy of Isaiah 2 is fulfilled in the establishment of the church as recorded in Acts 2.

Read Acts 2 and notice the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. The apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel, men heard it, believed it, and obeyed it. As a result, the Lord "added to the _____ daily those who were being _____" (Acts 2:47)

For the first time the church is said to be in existence. Always before this time, the church was spoken of as being in the future. This was shortly after Christ arose from the dead around AD 33.

- D. **The Church was Built by Christ:** Jesus said, "...and on this rock I will _____ My church..." (Matthew 16:18) Christ is the foundation of the church "*For _____ foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" (1Corinthians 3:11). This means any church built by somebody else is not the Lord's church.
- E. **The church is headed by Christ:** Paul said, "*And He [Christ] is the _____ of the body, the _____, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence*" (Colossians 1:18). Christ is the Head and the church is His body. Since this is true, the church must be in subjection to its Head, Christ. "*Therefore, just as the church is _____ to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything*" (Ephesians 5:24). Therefore, no man is, nor can be the head of the church here on the earth. Christ has all authority (Matthew 28:18), which leave none for anyone else to make rule, laws or commands for the church.
- F. **The church was purchased by the blood of Christ:** The great value of the church can be seen when we realized that it took the blood of Christ to purchase it. Paul told the Ephesian elder, "*Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He _____ with His own _____.*" (Acts 20:28). Peter said we were purchased "*knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious _____ of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1Peter 1:18-19).
- G. **The church is Christ possessed:** The church belongs to Christ. There is no exclusive name given to the Lord's church. It is certainly proper to refer to the Lord church by the names given in the Scriptures. Paul said, "The churches of Christ greet you" (Romans 16:16). A church that does not wear the name of Christ must not belong to Him. The members of the church belong to Christ and thus wear the name God gave His people to wear, that is, Christian (Acts 11:26) "*...And the disciples were **first called Christians** in Antioch*". "*You shall be called by **a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name***" (Isaiah 62:2) The Bible will make you only a Christian; nothing else. Let us respect Christ by wearing only His name for the church He died for.

- H. The church is independently organized:** Every church in the New Testament times was independent of every other church. Elders were ordained in “*every church*” (Acts 14:23). Each church had its own elder, deacons, and members. Paul’s letter to the Philippians was addressed to “...*To all the _____ in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the _____ and _____*” (Philippians 1:1). Elders and deacons are men who meet qualifications laid down in 1Timothy 3. The elders oversee the flock; only their own (1Peter 5:1-3), while the deacons serve the local church. Elders are also called bishops or pastors (preachers are not pastors). There is not organization larger or smaller than the local church through which the church is to function. State and nation-wide church groups are foreign to Bible teaching.
- I. The church is guided by the Bible only:** The Bible completely furnishes us with all that we need religiously (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The church has no other creed, spoken or written.
- J. The church worship in spirit and truth:** For worship to be pleasing to God it must be as God has directed or it is done in vain: “*And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matthew 15:9).
- K. The church teaches the Lord’s plan of salvation.** In the last lesson, we learned that God’s plan for saving us involves hearing, faith, repentance, confession, baptism, and being or remaining faithful. A church that teaches anything other way than this is not the Lord’s church.

IV. The work of the church

- A. The work of the church is given to us by Christ and is of a spiritual nature. It involves basically three thing:
1. Preaching the gospel: (1Thessalonians 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20)
 2. Helping needy saints (Romans 15:25-26; 1 Timothy 5:16).
 3. Teaching Christians (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 4:11-16).
- B. The church can use its money to provide for these things. The church has no authority for being involved in social affairs, social reforms, political affairs, or providing entertainment and recreation. These are things which belong in the home, or to the individual (1Corinthians 11:22-34).

V. The Lord established One Church

- A. The New Testament teaches that there is only on body. “*But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.*” (1Corinthians 12:20), the members are the saints who are in the body. “*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling*” (Ephesians 4:4).
- B. There is one body and the body is the church (Colossians 1:18) “*And He is the head of the body, the church...*”.
- If there is one body and the body is the church, then how many churches are there supposed to be? _____

- ✓ We have learned about the church of the Bible, the Lord’s church. Jesus established His church to provide spiritual truth and salvation. It is vital then that we be a part of the Lord’s church.
- ✓ We encourage you to search for a church that has these identifying marks. Investigate the local church of Christ. Many churches claim to be true, but simply do not follow the Bible in religious matters.
- ✓ Knowing truth in all matters of the church is as easy as reading.