

The Terre Haute **Speaker**

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...” (1 Peter 4:11).

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What Is the Church?

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The word “church” may bring different things to mind, depending on one’s frame of reference. Some think of the church in terms of a material building. They may be driving down the street and point to a building and say, “There’s the church!” There are those who think of the church as a denominational organization which has a world headquarters somewhere with congregations scattered around the world which follow after the creed held to by that denominational body.

How does the Bible, the word of God, define and describe the church? The identity of the church is seen several ways:

The Basic Meaning of the Word. The English word “church” comes from the Greek word “ekklesia” which means the “called out.” The Scriptures often talk about “the called of Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:6). The church of Christ, the called of Christ, is made up of those “called to be saints” (Romans 1:7), “called in one body” (Colossians 3:15), “called unto holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:7), “called out of darkness into light” (1 Peter 2:9-10), “called by the gospel” (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

Passages Where the Word Is Used. We learn what the church is from the passages in which the word is used. Consider a few examples: The church was built by Christ (Mat-

thew 16:18); it can hear and speak (Matthew 18:17); the Lord added the saved to it (Acts 2:47); fear came upon it (Acts 5:11); it has ears (Acts 11:22); it was gathered together (Acts 14:27); it was purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), Christ is the Head and Saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23); it is subject to Christ (Ephesians 5:24); Christ loved it and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25). Passages in which the church appears shows the church to be a body of saved people who belong to Jesus Christ.

What Saul Persecuted. Have you ever observed, in your study, what Saul persecuted? In Galatians 1:13, the man said he “persecuted the church.” In Acts 9:1 he was said to have persecuted “the disciples of the Lord.” Then, he is said to have persecuted the Lord’s “saints” (Acts 9:13; 26:10). Again, I read where he persecuted “men and women” (Acts 22:4). And, he was said to persecute “them that believed on the Lord” (Acts 22:19). Wait, I thought he persecuted the church! This tells us what the church is. The church is the Lord’s saints, the disciples of the Lord, men and women who believe on the Lord.

Figures by Which the Church Is Revealed. The church is set forth in the word of God through various figures to emphasize different features of the church:

The kingdom of God. Jesus told Peter, “I will build my church...And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom” (Matthew 16:18-19). Christ is King (John 18:36-37). The word of Christ is the law of the kingdom (John 12:48). All the world is the territory of the kingdom (Matthew 28:18-19; Mark 16:15). Those in Christ are the kingdom-citizens (Ephesians 2:19). The kingdom is spiritual in its nature (John 18:36; Romans 14:17), and is entered by a spiritual new birth (John 3:3-6).

The body of Christ. The “church is the body” (Ephesians 1:22-23) and the “body is the church” (Colossians 1:24). “There is one body” (Ephesians 4:4), the circle of the “called” (Colossians 3:15), the realm of the “reconciled” (Ephesians 2:16), and the sphere of the saved as Christ is “the saviour of the body” (Ephesians 5:23). Christ is “the head” over it (Ephesians 1:21-23), and it is entered as one is “baptized into” it (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The house of God. The church is God’s family (1 Timothy 3:15). God is the Father (Matthew 23:9). Those in Christ are “the children of God” (Galatians 3:26-27), “sons and daughters” (2 Corinthians 6:18). “And,” Paul said, “if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ...” (Romans 8:17). What a relationship!

The temple of God. “Temple” suggests a place where God meets those who worship Him. The church is God’s spiritual temple (1 Corinthians 3:9, 16-17; Ephesians 2:19-22). Christ is the chief cornerstone (Isaiah 28:16; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:5-8), and Christians are stones (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5-10).

The bride of Christ. Paul wrote the church at Corinth, “...I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2). As the bride of Christ, the church is “subject unto Christ” (Ephesians 5:24) and wears the name of Christ.

The flock of God. The elders in the church at Ephesus were admonished, “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” (Acts 20:28).

The vineyard of the Lord. As a vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16; 21:28-30), the church is a place of work for “we are labourers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9). Labor is vain outside the Lord’s vineyard (1 Corinthians 15:58).

In a sentence, the church is “them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (1 Corinthians 1:2).

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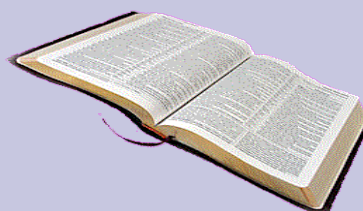
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Assembling Times:

Sunday @ 10:00 a.m. & 3:00 p.m.
Wednesday @ 7:00 p.m.



*The Bible
Is Our
Only Guide!*