

What is the Church?

Matthew 16:18

INTRODUCTION:

- A. **Matthew 16:18** – “. . . And on this rock I will build My church.” What is the church?
1. The prophets of old prophesied about it (Isaiah 2) . . . but what is it?
 2. Christ promised to build it (Matthew 16:18) . . . but what is it?
 3. Christ died for it (Ephesians 5:25) . . . but what is it?
 4. The saved are added to it (Acts 2:47) . . . But what is it?
 5. The manifold wisdom of God is made known through it (Ephesians 3:10) . . . But what is it?
 6. Christ will deliver it up to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24) . . . But what is it?
- B. What is the church?
1. Any survey including the question, “What is the Church?” would receive a wide variety of answers.
 2. It is important that we address this question to the Bible and allow its inspired words to answer it for us.
- C. An axiom of logic in debating states that a proposition well defined is already half-argued.
1. Clear definitions and well-placed clarifications are important in all areas of life.
 2. This is especially true regarding Bible matters.
- D. It is most certainly true that a poor understanding of what the church is has been the major cause of much religious confusion on the subject.
- E. It is our aim in this study to allow the Bible to establish the correct answer to our question, thus clarifying confusion.
1. Confusion about the church is apparent today.
 - a. It is apparent in the religious world in general.
 - b. It is apparent in the church as well.
 2. Where does such confusion come from?
 - a. Does it come from God? No, it does not!
1 Corinthians 14:33 – “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”
 - b. Since the confusion does not come from God, then the source would have to be the evil one and the error he continues to sow among men.”
 - c. Confusion abounds due to the lies Satan has told about the truth.
John 8:44 – “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks

a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

- F. **Matthew 16:18** – “. . . And on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”
1. First time the word “church” is used in the Bible.
 2. It is used in a promise that Jesus made.
 3. Jesus said he would build His church and that the church would indeed be His.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

A. Some would say:

1. The church is a building.
2. The church is a place where people worship.
3. The church is a religious organization.
4. The church is a particular religious people.

B. Many would consult a dictionary in answering the question. Webster’s dictionary says at least five things about church.:

1. The company of all Christians considered as a mystic spiritual body.
2. A building for public worship.
3. A congregation.
4. Public divine worship in a church.
5. A specified Christian denomination.

NOTE: Please remember that dictionaries define words according to current popular usage and acceptance. Definitions change as people change definitions. When the usage of a word changes in society, the change is also reflected in the change of the definition in the next printing of a dictionary.

C. **2 Timothy 3:16** – “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

1. Let the Bible answer our question “What is the church?”
2. Differing and confusing answers come from men.
3. Right answers come from the Bible.

D. Remembering that the New Testament was written in the Greek language, the Greek word for church is “**ekklesia**.”

1. “Ekklesia” is the combining of two other words to make one distinct idea.
 - a. “**EK**” – the prefix is a preposition.
 1. Prepositions are words that show relationships.
 2. “EK” primarily means “out of.”
 - b. “**KLESIA**” – is the verb “kaleo” with a modified spelling.
 1. Verbs show action.
 2. The verb “kaleo” means “to call.”
 - c. The two ideas “**EK**” and “**KALEO**” are combined to form a noun.
 1. A noun is the name of a particular person, place, or thing.

2. The name of something.
2. The meaning is: **“That which is called out of.”**
 - a. The calling power and the thing out of which the called are summoned are not inherent within the word.
 - b. These facts must be learned from the context in which the word is used.
- E. In ancient Greece, the word “ekklesia” had special reference to the calling of certain citizens out of the total population to serve as jurors in court cases.
 1. In order to prevent bribery and corruption, the ancient juries were very large, often consisting of 501 citizens.
 2. From the total population of qualified men, this large number would be called for jury duty.
- F. Later on, this Greek work was used to convey the idea that the gospel of Christ would be preached to the whole world and those who responded to the Lord would become His church . . . His assembly . . . His called out body of people.
- G. The Bible uses this word for the very first time in Matthew 16:18.
 1. In the context there, the thing called out is the following of Christ.
 2. Those who answer Christ’s call become the called out . . . The church.
 - a. The Church.
 - b. The called out of Christ.
 - c. The church of Christ.

THE CALLER

- A. The caller is Christ.
 1. **Matthew 11:28** – “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
 2. **Matthew 24:16** – “. . . If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”
 3. **Matthew 17:5** – “While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’”
 4. **2 Corinthians 6:17** – “Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.”

THE CALLING POWER

- A. Since Jesus said, “My church,” we conclude that He is the calling power.
- B. He certainly has the authority to call men to follow Him.
 1. This is true by virtue of His being God’s Son.
 - a. God acknowledged Him as such at His baptism. Matthew 3:17
 - b. God acknowledged Him as such at His transfiguration. Matthew 17:5

- c. **Romans 1:3-6** – “Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are **the called of Jesus Christ.**”
2. This is true by virtue of His being the Savior of the world.
- a. **Luke 2:11** – “For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” **Note:** In this passage the Savior is born.
- b. **Acts 5:30-31** – “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.” **Note:** In this passage the Savior is murdered by men then exalted by God.

THE MEANS OF CALLING IS THROUGH THE GOSPEL

- A. **2 Thessalonians 2:13-14**- “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which **He called you by our gospel,** for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- B. **1 Timothy – 6:12** – “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”
- C. **Colossians 3:15** – “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

THE NEW RELATIONSHIP

- A. Called, yes . . . But called out of what?
1. Called out of **SIN**. **Matthew 9:13** – “. . . I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”
 2. Called out of the **SNARE OF THE DEVIL**. **2 Timothy 2:25-26** –“ In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.
 3. Called out of **SPIRITUAL DEATH**.
 - a. **John 5:24** – “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

b. **Ephesians 2:1** – “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”

B. Called into what?

1. Called into **SALVATION**. **Acts 2:47** – “. . . And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”
2. Called into **FELLOWSHIP** with God, Christ, and other Christians (saints).
 - a. **1 John 1:7** – “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.
 - b. **Acts 2:41** – “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”

CONCLUSION:

- A. We asked the question, “What is the church?” We saw that it is the called out.
 1. The caller is Christ.
 2. The calling power is Christ.
 3. The means of the calling is through the gospel of Christ.
 4. The new relationship is gained because we are called out of sin called out of the snare of the devil, and called out of spiritual death and called into salvation and fellowship with God..
- B. What happens when 12 different people heed one person’s call to “come here?”
 1. They converge at the same place.
 2. The come together.
 3. So it is when men heed the call of Christ through the gospel.
 3. Have you answered the call of Christ in the gospel?
- C. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**