

The Church – Divinely Instituted

The Institution of the Church

When Jesus assembled those who followed Him, His actions were familiar of the religious practices of His day. However, Jesus makes it clear that He's not interested in continuing religious traditions; rather, He has come to build His church:

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:13-18)

The Church – Divinely Commissioned

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:18-20)

The Church – Divinely Empowered

The Repeated Promise of the Spirit

*And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” 6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**” (Acts 1:4-8, emphasis added)*

The Arrival of the Holy Spirit & The Birth of the Church

Ten days later, when Israel had gathered to celebrate the Holy Day Shavuot, commemorating when God gave the Law, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Christ-followers assembled together in an upper room in Jerusalem:

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?” (Acts 2:1-8)

Biblical Descriptions of the Church

In the Bible, the Church is explained with additional metaphors:

- *The Church is a Body.* (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)
- *The Church is a family, and Christians are the sons and daughters of God.* (2 Corinthians 6:18)
- *The Church is branches of the Vine (Jesus), under the care of the Vinedresser (The Father).* (John 15:1-5)
- *The Church is a building* (1 Corinthians 3:9) *comprised of living stones, with Jesus as the Cornerstone.*
- *The Church is the Holy Temple of the Living God* (1 Corinthians 3:16) *that grows.* (Ephesians 2:20-21)
- *The Church is a royal priesthood* (1 Peter 2:9)
- *The Church is the salt & the Light of the world* (Matthew 5:13-15)

The Location of the Church

The Bible speaks of the Church in the following ways¹: (read)

- A gathering in a home - *Greet also the church in their house.* (Romans 16:5)
- Christians of a City - *To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints* (Romans 1:1)
- Assemblies of Christians within a particular city - *To the church of God that is in Corinth* (1 Corinthians 1:2),
- Representation of Christians in a region - *So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up.* (Acts 9:31)
- Christians united by faith in Jesus, despite being located across a larger expanse of multiple regions - *The churches of Asia send you greetings.* (1 Cor. 16:19)

¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/8-ecclesiology-church>

Seeing the Church presented biblically helps us understand that there is not a multitude of churches, distinguished by their differences; rather, there is one Church, characterized by its unity:

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
(Ephesians 4:4-6)

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
(Hebrews 10:24-25)

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ (Matthew 7:21-23)

The Worship of the Church

You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)

We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

These I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” (Isaiah 56:7)

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3)

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe[d] came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

The Ordinances of the Church

Definition - An ordinance is simply a prescribed practice.

Baptism

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

The Lord's Supper/Communion

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." 27 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matthew 26:26-29)

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Membership in the Christian Church

- *And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47)*
- *You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)*
- *Obeys your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)*
- *If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)*
- *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12)*
- *To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, (Ephesians 4:12)*