

~~Life of Jesus Wants Us To Be~~
Series: ~~What We Believe~~

Title: What is the Church?
Text: Ephesians 1:22-23 (A Wonderful Privilege) ~~What We Believe~~

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to the Book of Ephesians. The book of Ephesians chapter 1 verse 22. Today, I would like to ask you the question:

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Ephesians chapter 1 verse 22. (Read Vs 22-23)

Prayer

What a wonderful privilege to be part of the church ~~of Jesus Christ~~. To have a personal relationship to the head, himself, the Lord Jesus Christ; and to have a connection with every member of the body; and to know that this pattern of interpersonal relations, unlike an earthly marriage which has to say, "until death do us part." This in contrast is forever. For not even death can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Amen)

So, we belong to a great body called the church. But, what is the church? Is the church a building? Is it this great plant that we have here on ~~the corner of~~ ^{property} Palm and Hemlock? Is the church a denomination? Is it a group of local churches? What is the church?

We often hear the phrase: "THE CHURCH SPEAKS ON A CERTAIN ISSUE." Is that possible? Is that the church?

Some folks talk about the universal church. Others talk about the local church. Dear friends, what is the church?

Now, it doesn't really matter what you think the church is. In fact, it doesn't matters what I think the church is. But, it does matter what the Bible says concerning the question: WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

So, I would like to share with you 5 principles as to what the Bible teaches about the church. I trust you have your Bibles handy. Because we will be looking at a number of passages.

(1) Number one: *According to* ~~I trust you still have your Bibles open to~~ Ephesians chapter 1.

The church is ~~presented very clearly in the Word of God as being~~ THE BODY OF CHRIST. Ephesians chapter 1 verse 22 and 23 says: “And he put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

So, these two verses teach that the church is THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST. Therefore, the church is not denomination. It is not a given local church. Although, *2* ~~we~~ trust that the BODY OF CHRIST is meeting in this locality this morning.

But ~~so~~, the church is the BODY OF CHRIST. And *Dear Friends* any other definition aside from that definition, or added to or subtracted from that definition, is not a correct definition. Because it is the only thing God says is the church. THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST.

Turn over to Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4 verse 4. Paul says: “there is one body and one spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.” Dear friends, there is only one body. Not two or three or four. Only one. Only one body of Christ.

Now, knowing that, let me ask you a *friend* question: HOW DOES ONE GET TO BE A PART OF THAT CHURCH? HOW DOES ONE BELONG TO THE BODY OF CHRIST?

Will you turn, please, to I Cor. Chapter 12. I Cor. Chapter 12. HOW DOES ONE GET TO BE PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST? I Cor. Chapter 12 beginning with Vs 12. “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one spirit.”

Dear friends, there is your answer. The Bible says that by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. There is only one body. There is only one church. And there is only one Spirit.

In other words, no person can become a member of "THE CHURCH", no matter what He or she has done until he has been literally satuated, immersed, completely baptized, not by water,..As important as that is...But, until he ^{she} has been immersed by the Holy Spirit of God. Until the Holy Spirit has come to take up His dwelling place in your body and mine. Until that happens, we are not a part of THE CHURCH. No matter what church membership rolls we happen to be on.

You see, dear friends, if you have never been immersed with the Holy Spirit of God, you do not belong to the Body of Christ, which is The Church.

And this is so very important. I have met people who belong to good churches...~~Bible teaching churches~~...churches that teach systematical the WORD OF GOD...But, who have never experienced the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Folks who do not know what it means to belong to the real church where there is life and vatality and a personal relationship with the living God.

Oh, we may have justified ourselves into a church ^{membership} We may have believed that by certain things we have done or haven't done, that that made us members. But THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO GET INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST. And the Holy Spirit must do it.

() O.K...GREAT!!! ^{But} How then does the Holy Spirit do it?

The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is the personal possession of every person who believes in Jesus Christ. In Romans chapter 8, we learn that if a person has ~~not the Spirit of Christ~~ ^{doesn't have the Holy Spirit}, he is not part of God. So, you must believe in Jesus before you can possess the Holy Spirit. And the moment you come to trust Jesus by faith.....that is; that Jesus died in my place on the cross....You see, we all deserve to die. The wages of sin is death, ^{meaning} ~~or~~ separation from God. But, God loved us so much that he desires that no one should perish, so Jesus suffered death for us....He paid for ^{all} ~~my~~ sins on the ~~cross~~. When I understand that and trust ^{Jesus} Him as my Lord and Saviour..At that moment...whether I consciencely realize it or not..the Holy Spirit comes to take up his place in my life.

Then I became a member of The Body of Christ

Do you understand? It is by one Spirit that we are all baptized into one body. *One Spirit*

By the way...just for the record, water baptism is a symbol of that immersion of the Spirit of God. That is why water baptism is so important.

(2) Secondly, concerning the church. It is not only the body of Christ, it is, literally, believers in Christ. The emphasis is on the word "in".

Believers in Christ. You say.."That is all simple." TRUE..But, dear friends, that is what the Word of God says.

Turn over to Acts chapter 2. The book of Acts ..chapter 2 and verse 44. Acts 2:44 says.."And all those who had believed were together.

and In Vs 41 of Acts 2 we read: "Those who had received his word were baptized Acts chapter 5 verse 14..."And all the more believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of men and women."

The church is believers in Christ Jesus.

I remember asking a person, once...."Do you really believe that Jesus Christ was God in human flesh?" He answered,..."No Way, No one believes that anymore."

Dear friends, the Scribes and Pharisees said one time when Jesus forgave the sins of a man he healed, they said: "Wait a minute. This is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God only."

Now, I don't know about you. But, I want nothing to do with a Christ who isn't God. Because He cannot pay for my sins in the ~~20th~~ ^{3rd} century. If Jesus was merely a man, and even if he had lived a perfect life, he still could not substitute his life for mine. Because the Bible says that the soul that sins it shall die. It only takes one lie to make a liar. *One sin to make a sinner*

Some folks get a little ^{jeal} righteous at this point. And they say, "Well, my sin is not as bad as the other ^{Peoples} ~~fellows~~." But, ^{beloved} ~~beloved~~, it only take one sin to make a sinner. One lie to make a liar..

And if ^{Jesus} Christ committed one sin he would have to die for his own sin. And thus he could not die for my sins in the ^{21st} ~~20th~~ century.....

But, Jesus was God incarnate in human flesh who paid for all of our sins. And his life as the infinite God could pay for the sum total of all human life.....past, present, and future..... ^{That is why it is important to confess our sin and believe in Jesus}

The Bible is concerned that people believe in ^{Jesus} ~~Christ~~ as God. And if you do not believe that, you are not a part of the church. We must believe that Jesus is God. For believers were added..... ^{Trusted to believe in Christ}

(3) | Thirdly, the church is a bond with Christ. And dear friends, we often miss this ^{point}. Turn back to Ephesians, please.....Ephesians chapter 4 and Vs 3.....THE CHURCH IS A BOND WITH CHRIST.....

In Ephesians 4 verse 3 we read "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Why? Because there is only one body, you see....."Being diligent to perserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Now, will you turn, please, again, to I Corinthians 12.....A great chapter that ought to warm the believers heart towards one another and Christ. I Corinthians 12 and let's begin at Verse 25.....

(Read 12:25-27)

Isn't that exciting? The church has a bond with ^{Living} Christ. We are in a vital union and relationship with Him. We are one in Him. We are not two or three.. [Paul condemned the church at Corinth because they were saying: Well, I am of Paul. and others were of Appolos. And others were of Peter. But, the wrost group of all were those who said: "Well, I am of Christ."

Paul ask: "IS CHRIST DIVIDED".....Of course not, we are one in Him. It is a contridickion of the very Gospel to have anything other than a perfect ONE BODY IN CHRIST. THE CHURCH IS A BOND...A VITAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.....

The Bible teaches in Acts 2:44 that all who believed were together... Think about that. The wonderful bond that the church had with Christ and with one another.

Acts 2:1 says "and when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place." TREMENDOUS! The 120 were together in the upper room. When Pentecost came they were in one place together.

Acts 2:46 says "And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart."

Dear friends, one of the secrets to the ministry and the power of the early church was the togetherness of all who believed. They were of one accord. They were in unity. They were together.

Let me share a poem with you that expresses this unity so well. This poem is based on Psalms 133 which says "How good and pleasant it is for the brothers to dwell together in unity." This poem is really a prayer.

Please unity us Heavenly Father with the singleness of mind.
May our thoughts and conversations be ever humble, gentle, and kind.
Bestow your infinite wisdom, geniously guide us from above.
Fill our hearts with your compassion and incircle us with love.
We know without your blessings, ours is a lost and hopeless blight.
So may we be obient and pleasing in your sight.
May we start all our gatherings, make decision with fervent prayer
And through the Holy Spirit, always feel your presence there.
Please unity us Heaven Father, so the world around will see
A happy congregation, dedicated to thee.

I think that expresses it. The bond and unity of Christ

So, WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

It is the Body of Christ.

It is believers in Christ

It is a bond with Christ.

(4B) Then, fourth, the church is a building on christ.

You know, we are building on a lot of things in this day and age. On our programs...on our methods..on doing social service. The Bible says in I Cor. chapter 3 that ^{at} no other foundation can a man lay, then the one that is already laid, Jesus Christ. ^{with}

Dear friends, WHAT FOUNDATION ARE YOU BUILDING ON? On your own feelings? On your own self-righteousness? Or, on what you think is salvation? Or, are you building on Jesus Christ?

THE CHURCH IS A BUILDING ON CHRIST. Not, an external building. Not this building, as beautiful as it is. It is a building on Christ. It is a spiritual building. And Jesus is the corner stone of that building. That is why Bible doctrine is so important. Relationship is important. But without the correct foundation, ^{Relationships? become} ~~it is~~ meaningless.

What are you building on? Why are you doing what you are doing? Are you building on Christ. That is the real church.

(5B) And finally, the church is the bride for Christ. The bride for Christ.

Have you ever heard that before? Dear friends, did you know that we are married to Jesus? If you are a Christian, you are married to Jesus. That is how close the relationship is. And one day the bridegroom is going to come back for his bride...the church. Just a couple of passages....

Turn to Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians chapter 5 and beginning with verse 25.....Ephesians 5:25....(READ VS 25-27)

~~What~~ What a promise..What a blessing...One day the Lord is going to take that church that he gave his life for, and he is going to present it back to himself. THE GREAT BRIDE GROOM. *Tremendous*

Then, one final passage. Turn to the book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 19. Revelation chapter 19 beginning with Verse 7..(READ VS 7-8)

You see, we all must have the right clothes on. And the clothes are not going to be our own self-righteousness. Because the Bible says that all of our righteousness is as filth rages. And no one in filth rages of self-righteousness can ever be married to the bridegroom. That is the point...

We need the righteousness of God's gift. It is the righteousness of Christ. It is the righteousness that is immediately imparted to the believer the moment he says YES...I will receive Jesus as my Lord and Saviour.

Oh, let me tell you.. It is wonderful to have that assurance that you have the righteousness of Christ. We are His bride. And it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ that has made us acceptable in God's sight. Christianity is not something that we do or we don't do. So, many people are struggling to work their way to heaven. You can't do it. WHY DO WE TRY? God wants to live His life in us. He wants to give us His righteousness. And He does so when we ask Jesus to be our Saviour. "For as many as receive Him, to them gave He the right to be called sons of God."

It is tremendous! Matthew 25:6 says that "at midnight there was a shout, Behold, the bridegroom cometh. Come out and meet him."

Yes Friend, Are you ready to meet the bridegroom, Jesus? If He were to come right now, would you be ready to meet Him?

There is only one way to have that assurance. There is only one way to know that you are ready. And that is by putting on the righteousness of Christ. By receiving Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. *And if you have never done that, I pray you will do so today.*
SHALL WE CLOSE IN PRAYER

Go - what is the law?
Th - The law is the rule of life
IT IS A RULE WITH CHRIST
IT IS A RULE WITH CHRIST
IT IS A RULE WITH CHRIST

Shall we close in prayer?