

## Lesson 3

# What is The Church?

In considering becoming a member of a church it is important we understand what the church is.

### Matthew 16:13-20

Here Christ makes a two-fold promise:

- He would have a church (build my church)
- He would preserve His church (gates of hell shall not prevail)

What is a church and when did the church start?

- **A Church is a Local Assembly**

*Heb. 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the **church** will I sing praise unto thee.*

*Ps. 22:22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the **congregation** will I praise thee.*

- **A Church is the only expression of the body of Christ**

The church had its beginning during the ministry of Christ. But the church as the body of Christ did not begin until Pentecost. Before His ascension, Christ promised that His followers would be baptized with the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:5), which was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2).

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul describes another part of what happened on that day (vs 12-13).

Not only do believers receive the Spirit at salvation; but possessing the Spirit places us into (baptizes us into) Christ (Gal 3:27) and unites us to Him (1 Cor 6:15-17) making each believer a member of Christ. When the “members” of Christ join themselves together they form the body of Christ, which is the church.

It was a body in the sense of a gathering of people (i.e. School body), But the expression “body of Christ” is not referring to a mere physical gathering of people. It refers to a gathering of spiritual people.  
(Jn. 14:17, I Cor. 12:13, 27)

*Eph. 1:22-23 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the **church, Which is his body**, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

*Eph. 4:16 From whom the whole **body fitly joined together and compacted** by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

There is no “universal Church”. When members of Christ gather Biblically (i.e. in his name, Mat 18) they form a complete body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27).

This is seen in every local church. The church exists by covenant even when the members are not physically gathered. The local assembly finds expression when it gathers for meetings (Eph 4:16).

At the coming of Christ, all believers will be gathered together. This will be the church and body of Christ at that time.

### **Who may be members of the church? Or The material of the church**

*Lk. 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make **ready a people prepared for the Lord.***

We see from this that John the Baptist would be sent to prepare the suitable building materials for the church which Jesus would build (See Mal. 3). This is the “way” he was to prepare. The ministry of John is called “The beginning of the gospel” (Mk. 1:1). We see in Mark chapter one how he made the material.

*Mk. 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*

- Repentance and faith (See Acts 19:4)
- Baptism

So, we have John preparing a group of people by them being saved and baptized.

Jesus knew the authority of John and traveled over 60 miles to be baptized by a Baptist preacher to “fulfil all righteousness” (Mat. 3:15).

The church did not begin at Pentecost by the Holy Spirit. It began with Christ at the Jordan River, was empowered at Pentecost and was organized and structured by the Apostles which were the first members of that church (See I Cor. 12:28).

Jesus promised to preserve his church. (All Things “Church”)

If there has been ever a moment, since Jesus started the church, that it has not been present upon this earth then Jesus is a liar.

The commission was given to the first church to reproduce itself.

The task of the church is to carry on the work of the Lord (Jn. 14:12).  
Jesus evangelized (Mk. 1:14)  
He Baptized (Jn. 3:22-4:1)  
He Stabilized (Mt. 5:1-2)  
These are all three contained in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20).

Each church is the Body of Christ, because we continue His work until He returns.

Eph. 3:21 *Unto him be glory in the **church** by Christ Jesus **throughout all ages, world without end.** Amen.*

This would be done by churches starting churches. This is what the book of Acts is about. In the following chapter of Ephesians (See chapter 4) we are told that there is only “one Lord, one faith, one baptism”. There is only one, not many.

One baptism is to be in line with one faith, given by one Lord. This is the Apostles doctrine. This is to be the pattern until Christ comes.