

The Church

What do the following verses say about the Church?

1. Ephesians 3:21

The Church exists to glorify God. The purpose of the Church is to display the attributes of God. It does so by announcing God's desire to graciously include all people in salvation through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:10). This is accomplished through a great commitment to the great commandment (Matthew 22:37-40) and the great commission (Matthew 28:16-20).

The purpose of the Church is to glorify God (the vision of the Church) by making disciples (the mission of the Church) of all nations (the goal of the Church). The Church does not need to find its purpose it need to fulfill its purpose.

Put another way, the Church is God's chosen agent to demonstrate his power and proclaim his name during this age. God uses the Church in same way he used Pharaoh (Romans 9:17). Different age, different agent, same purpose.

The Church exists in two states, gathered and scattered. The purpose of the gathered Church is worship. The purpose of the scattered Church is witness. (*Acts 8:1-4*) Enns states the purpose of the Church as follows: “*The two overriding purposes of the Church can be delineated: **gathered**, ministering to the body, **scattered**, ministering to the world...The purpose for the Church gathered is for the Church to come to maturity. This occurs through teaching, fellowship and worship...The New Testament Church did not attempt to carry out its evangelism within the confines of a building, but rather out in the world...the ministry of evangelism was not carried on by a select few, but by ordinary believers as well. The central message of the early Church proclaimed was Christ; moreover, they took their message beyond the Jewish boundary, crossing previously rigid cultural barriers. The result was that many people became believers.*”¹

The term Church means called out group or assembly. It began at Pentecost through the work of the Holy Spirit as he placed people into the body of Christ. (Acts 2, 1 Corinthians 12:13)

2. Colossians 1:18

The Church is headed by Jesus Christ, it being his body. (Ephesians 1:22,23, 5:23, 24 Colossians 1:24) As its head, Christ is the ultimate authority. He controls, directs, and gives life to the Church. As His body, the Church is the representation of Christ to the world. Other figures of speech that also define the relationship between Christ and the Church are:

- a. vine and branches, John 15
- b. shepherd and sheep, John 10

¹ Paul Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology, Moody Press, Chicago, Ill. Page 365-6.

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- c. cornerstone and building, Ephesians 2:19-21
- d. High Priest and kingdom, I Peter 2
- e. last Adam and new creation, Romans 5
- f. bridegroom and bride, Ephesians 5

3. Matthew 16:13-18

The Church is built on the testimony of faith in Christ. There are two expressions of the Church: local and universal. The local church is designated by location (Revelation 2:1, Colossians 4:15), and is composed of those who have true saving faith and some who do not (Matthew 13:36-43, 1 John 2:19). The Universal Church is made up of all truly regenerate believers from all ages, nations, tribes and tongues (Ephesians 3:13, 21, Revelation 5:9).

4. Philippians 1:1

The Church is made up of saints, deacons and Elders.

- a. **Saint** is a term that means those are set apart or holy. It refers to all true believers (Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:2).
- b. **Deacons** serve under the authority of the elders to free them up for the ministry of the word and prayer (Acts 6:1-4). They are qualified based on 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Titus 1.
- c. **Elders** are leaders of a local Church. The term is also used interchangeably with overseer and bishop. Elder is the title, bishop is descriptive. Elders are appointed and qualified based on 1 Timothy 3:1-6, Titus 1:7-9. The duties of Elders include the following.
 - i. Overseeing and ruling (I Timothy 5:17) The Church is to have a plurality of elders (Titus 1:5).
 - ii. Preaching and teaching (I Timothy 5:17,18) The term “pastor teacher” (Ephesians 4:11) refers to an elder who is to carry out both functions of pastoring (caring) and teaching (educating). It is a two-word description of one office.
 - iii. Shepherding (Acts 28:20)
 - iv. Guarding from false doctrine (Titus 1:9)
 - v. Managing the Church (1 Timothy 3:5)

5. 1 Corinthians 11:23-34, Matthew 28:19

The Church ordinances are communion and baptism. Charles Ryrie states, “*An ordinance is an outward rite prescribed by Christ to be performed by the Church.*” Communion (also called the Lord’s Supper) is a memorial. Its purpose is to create humble remembrance of the sacrificial and beneficial death of Christ.

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Baptism is an outward expression of an inward commitment. It communicates the believer's public association with Jesus Christ. It is the "wedding ring" of the Christian faith. It is symbolic of the cleansing of forgiveness, the resurrection of the redeemed and the union of the believer with Christ (Romans 6:5-11).

6. Acts 8:1-4, 9:31

The Church is created to grow. It grows through persecution or reverent peace. Persecution (suffering for one's faith) serves to purify and then expand the Church. More Christians were martyred for their faith in the last century than in all previous centuries combined. As a result Christianity is the fastest growing religion in the world. The other means of growth is during a time of peace, when believers have a genuine fear of the Lord.

Which verse meant the most to you? Explain.