

9th-10th December, 2021

THEME: MY CHURCH

Text: Matthew 16:18.

I will read from 13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some 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 answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus answered and said to 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 also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

By the grace of God for the purpose of this teaching we will focus on the definition of the church, understanding its nature and purpose, looking at some biblical images of the church and emphasizing church unity on essential truths.

WHAT IS CHURCH?

The Church simply means the called out people from the world.

Those who have been called out of darkness into the marvelous light of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is visible church. We have local and the physical churches that we see around us and around the world, as well as the members of those churches.

The invisible and universal church, however, these are all believers all over the world.

When most people hear the word church they probably think of a building/cathedral or building or a fancy building where believers gather.

But biblically speaking, a church is much more than a building.

In fact, the church is not a building at all, but is all about the people worshipping inside the buildings.

But what is the church? The area of theology that seeks to understand all aspects of the church is known as ecclesiology. It is derived from the Greek word *ekklesia* that is a general term referring to a gathering or assembly.

What is the Christian Church?

The early Christian church had no buildings, at least not in the sense of what we would consider church buildings today.

First century Christians were often persecuted and, as a result, often met in secret usually in homes.

As the influence of Christianity spread, eventually buildings dedicated to worship were established and became what we know today as churches.

In this sense, then, the church consists of people not buildings. Fellowship, worship and ministry are all conducted by people, not buildings. Church structures facilitate the role of God's people, but they do not fulfill it.

The Visible and Invisible Church

When speaking of the church, theologians often use terms such as the visible and local church as opposed to the invisible and universal church.

The visible and local church is, of course, the physical churches that we see around us and around the world, as well as the members of those churches.

The invisible and universal church, however, refers to all believers everywhere and is one church, united in Christ, not many physical churches. It is important to understand some basic differences between the visible and universal or invisible church?

One key reason is, so that we do not confuse what we sometimes see fallible churches doing with the reality of the universal church.

Most times local and visible churches often host nonbelievers, but also the believers themselves are imperfect, resulting in challenges and tensions in every visible church.

What Does the Church Do?

The church is a body of believers with a specific nature, purpose.

The biblical roles or ministries of the church are foundational to it.

What are these roles?

They are many, but key to any church are foundations:

in worship,

edification

and evangelism.

Worship that is God and Christ-centered.

John 4:23-24, But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

It is not about entertaining Christians with flashy displays or presentations, but about expressing our love by worshiping our Creator.

We are to praise and glorify God in worship.

As such, every Christian needs to be part of regular fellowship and worship.

Most Christians today get to church after praise and worship session.

Edification is also a role of the church. Act 20:32, "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

It involves edifying believers, but also nurturing, building up or helping believers to mature in Christ. This has to do with discipleship, where the churches are tasked with ministries such as Bible study, Sunday school, praying for one another, acts of genuine hospitality and more.

1 Peter 2:2, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

Ephesians 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,

Acts 9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

1 Corinthians 14:26, What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

Romans 1:11

For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

Evangelism is also a key role of the church. Act 1:8, But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” This means reaching out to a lost world with the Good News about Jesus. Since people often have questions or doubts about Christ and Christianity. Those who know the truth must be able to defend it, this is also part of the role of the church.

Part of evangelism is to express compassion and mercy tangibly by helping others.

In following Christ’s example to love others, the church, too, must seek to make a real difference in the world not neglecting the poor and the widows in the church. Acts 6:2-4, Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3

Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

If a church fails to fulfill any of these key roles – worship, edification, evangelism – then the church is not functioning as God intends and is not the church of God.

DAY 2

Images of the Church

Ephesians 4:11-16, And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what

every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

There are many images of the church in the Bible, but we will look at just three:

1. the Body of Christ is the image of the church

2Corinthians 6:16, And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them

And walk among them.

I will be their God,

And they shall be My people."

Romans 12:5

so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

Ephesians 1:23

which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

2. The church as the People of God is another image of the church.

2 Chronicles 7:14 "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

It is only the church as the people of God that must humble themselves before God since He is opposed to every prideful person (James 4:6).

Only when they turn or repent from their wickedness will God hear their cries and answer their prayers, but He will also forgive those who repent and then heal the land where they live.

This prayer should be on the lips of every Christian today in regards to our own country.

Psalms 3:8 "Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people!"

This verse indicates that salvation is fully a work of God and from the Lord for His people.

In John 1:12-13 where the Apostle John wrote “to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Even being born again is a work of God because salvation is a free gift and cannot possibly be earned (Eph 2:8-9).

Psalm 28:8 “The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed.”

We cannot be strong in our own strength but only in the strength of God can we endure.

The Apostle Paul wrote that we can do all things only if Christ will strengthen us (Phil 4:13). God is also the saving refuge for those who are His people.

They can find shelter from the storms of life and most importantly, they receive eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Only by this can we be called the children of God.

3. The church as the Bride of Christ.

The church is also referred to as the Bride of Christ.

This is talking of a special and sacred family relationship between Christ and the church as the bride.

2 Corinthians 11:2-3; For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.
3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Ephesians 5:30-32 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.
31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Revelation 19:7-9, Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

9 Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”