

The Church

by

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When we are asked 'what is the church? We are almost asking two questions. We may think this means what is the church now, or we may think it asks what was it at conception, but we are asking 'What is the Church'. In order that we may answer this correctly we have to understand what it was in the beginning. That is because whatever it is now it should be what it was in the beginning, and whatever it was in the beginning, it should be now. The word church in Greek is 'ekkllesia' or the Hebrew 'Kahilah'. The English word church transliterates from the Greek word 'Kaleo' which means 'called out'. So we see that the church is a group or community of 'called out people'. But from what are they called out?

They are called out from the world to live for Christ and to serve Him. The word 'Kaleo' occurs some 147 times in the New Testament, but we must realise that the church is the people and not the building, however spectacular it may be. So we have learned that the church is called by God, called out of the world, and called by Grace to be His peculiar people.

We are called...

In [Rom 8:28](#) we are called according to His purpose.

In [Rom 9:25](#) I will call them my people which were not my people.

In [Eph 1:18](#) that you may know what is the hope of this calling.

In [Rom 8:28](#) Ye are called according to His calling, not your own.

In [2Tim 1:9](#) we are called with a Holy calling.

In [Heb 3:1](#) it is a Heavenly calling.

In [Col 3:15](#) Ye are called in one body.

In [Eph 2:32](#) we are part of the **one new man** made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

So we are called to be one visible body throughout the ages to be a testimony of the grace that God alone can give to the salvation of men. This ekklesia is born of God, buried with Him in baptism and surrendered to His service.

The Uniqueness of the Church

Now the church was a unique concept of God, which means that God has never done anything like it before. I say that because there are some who teach that the church began with Abraham, this is absolute nonsense. Let us discover a little more about this uniqueness

In [Col 1:18](#) we read we are the body of Christ.

In [Eph 2:11-16](#) we learn this body which is the church, is made up of both Jews & Gentiles and is called the 'One New Man'

In [1Cor 12:13](#) we learn that entrance into this body can only be by Spirit Baptism.

So then, if the church is the body of Christ, **and it is!!**

And if entrance into that body can only be by Spirit Baptism, **And it is!!**

Then this is the unique birth of the church, as God has never done anything like it throughout history, and only since Acts 2 have we had Spirit Baptism.

The Diversity of The Church

The church is a living breathing organism, and as such it is multifaceted, we see a variety of beliefs within what we term as Christendom. There are Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals,

Brethren in the mainstream. Then we have Lutherans, Catholics, Unitarians, Congregationalists and Seventh Day Adventists and many more besides, each owning its own popular statement of faith or beliefs. Many of these groups have been persuaded toward a particular collection of beliefs, as a result of taking a different line on particular issues in scripture. Some of which hold certain issues more importantly than others. For instance the Baptists have their name from a particular line they take in water baptism. Likewise the Pentecostals hold a doctrine which they believe manifests the workings of the Holy Spirit. While Methodists were founded by John Wesley and worked on the premise that being methodical was more important. For sure there are many people with these groups that are sound in their faith, but by and large many of these groups are majoring on minors. That is to say they are making more of some doctrinal issues than others. But it is of vital importance that believers keep the whole council of God, and not major on minors.

We have unity in diversity and the knowledge that God has given. Some groups may well be more informed in Biblical understanding, but that should not be a divisive thing, rather it should bring us closer together, as God has given some more knowledge, according to His purpose and we the church should have unity in diversity, but the bottom line is that we all believe in the fundamentals of the faith.

The Power of the Church

Jesus not only founded the church but He endowed it with power and authority. This is authority that had once belonged to the Pharisees, but Jesus made this statement;

“Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And who ever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whom ever it falls, it will grind him to powder. Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived He was speaking of them.” (Math 21:43-45)

Jesus is head of the church not only in an organic sense but also in an administrative sense. This means that He is not only head of the body, but King of the Spiritual commonwealth. He has said to Peter;

“I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, and what ever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven” (Math 16:19)

This means they have the power to accept or reject people into the Kingdom, the words church and Kingdom are used interchangeably here. Peter receives power as the leader of the apostles and not as head of the Catholic Church, that power is then passed on to the rest of the church, howbeit in lesser quantities. They have the power to excommunicate those who are undisciplined, but are told to make disciples.

Church Discipline

The purpose of having discipline in the church is twofold, first it brings into effect the Law of Christ through love concerning the admission of members. Secondly it secures spiritual edification for believers, making them aware of their responsibility to the rest of the body. Both of these reasons will serve to keep the Holiness within the church, it serves first of all to keep the exercise of discipline through the desire for a Holy life. Should the problem become terminal, it serves to bring repentance in the first instance, and exclusion in the worse case.

But at all times the church should always have the saving of the individual in mind. This position of discipline is only for the church officers to apply, after members have practiced the principles of

Math 18:15-20 in the first instance. However, the church should not develop an hierarchy, but should serve each other in love for the Lord's sake.

The Ordinary Ministry of the Church

The Lord's clear intension for the church was that they should always help the poor, it is clear that no one was to be short of the necessities of life. (Acts 4:34) Although the first priority should be that they preach the gospel. This task of looking after the poor was usually done by the deacons, however it is not the usual things to day. Many churches have regarded the office of deacon as part of the leadership structure. But this was not so in the beginning we see something of this in Acts 6 with the ministraton to the Greek widows. Today many are content just to go to have meetings and listen to speakers, but not to serve the Lord on a practical level. There is a particular joy in serving the Lord in a practical way, but for those who neglect this duty they themselves become impoverished. Also this is yet another way in which we can quench the Holy Spirit. We as the church should live to the praise and glory of the Lord and that means practical service. You can't bring praise to His name by just attending meetings, as informed by James (James 1:22-25), nor can you serve Him by spending all your time reading the Bible. You have to be careful to maintain works as we are informed (James 2:14-20) the Lord Himself will help you into the works He wants you to do, in fact your whole life may well be a preparation for that very task as God appoints you in His Kingdom.

The Gifts of the Spirit

Everyone who is born again into the church or Kingdom of God, was given at least one gift for service. We will discuss this fully at a further date, but we can touch on this most important topic. These gifts of of the Holy Spirit mentioned in 1Cor12 are to be distinguished as throne gifts as appose to the natural talents you might be born with. These gifts are specifically for the church to function in love, which is why Paul says in 1Cor 12:31 **“Yet I show you a more excellent way”** before proceeding into chapter 13.