

The Kingdom and the Church

The Kingdom is simply the reign or rule of God, whether in heaven or on earth. The Kingdom of God is an everlasting Kingdom-there has never been time when the Kingdom of God has not been in existence. (Ps. 103:19, Ps. 145:13)

The Church is the instrument of the Kingdom to witness about what God has said and done, what God is going to do and what God is doing right now. God wants to work through His church to declare and demonstrate His desires for the world.

The word for church comes from the Greek word Ekklesia. Among Greek culture it had the meaning of a body of citizens gathered to discuss affairs of state. The Christian application of this word is those called out of the world with a definite purpose- a calling- to be joined together as the people of God.

Our Calling in Christ

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praise of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

1 Pt. 2:9

“To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. According to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. “

Ephesians 3:10

A Quality Decision

Just as each person must choose to repent and commit their lives to Christ to be saved, so too each Christian must make a quality decision to commit themselves to a local church. The choice is a willing submission to the covering, protection and authority delegated to the local church and its leadership (Heb. 13:17)

Responsibilities of those called Together by the Lord in a local Church

1. To pray and ask God to be led to a place where you could be ‘built ‘together with others as ‘living stones’ in the household of God (1 Pt. 2:5)
2. To embrace the Vision of the church and use your gifts and influence toward its success. (Pro. 29:18)
3. To submit yourselves to the delegated resident Five Fold Ministry.
4. To be open and teachable in receiving instruction, correction and encouragement through the Five Fold Ministry, Eldership and congregation of the church.
5. To support in prayer and with finances the goals, outreaches and ministries of the local church.



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Commitment and the Local Church

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Supernatural Revelation Needed

The Church has been on the heart of God from the beginning of time. The church is not God's plan B, nor is it of man's origin or design. It is spiritual, supernatural and ordained of God to carry His presence and authority in the earth today.

After Peter had correctly answered Jesus question of, *"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"* (Matt. 16:13) the answer Jesus gave back to Peter is foundational to our understanding of the Church of Jesus Christ. The Lord said, *"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My father who is in heaven. 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."*
- Matt. 16:17, 18

The key to understanding the answer of Peter is in the phrase 'on this rock'. Through the centuries many have misunderstood that the Lord was building His church around a mortal man. As Christians we know almost instinctively that there is only one who stands as mediator between God and man; only one who is worthy to judge and open the books of life- the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

His intent is to build His church around the 'rock' of revelation. It was heaven that gave Peter the understanding and boldness to speak forth truth- and the Church must be built similarly from revelation and supernatural direction from Heaven.

God's Purposes From the Beginning of Time

"The human race was created in the image and likeness of God for one purpose: to provide an eternal companion for the Son. After the fall and promise of redemption through the coming Messiah, the Messianic race (Israel) was born and nurtured in order to bring the Messiah. And the Messiah came for one intent and only one: to give birth to His church, thus to obtain His bride. The Church then turns out to be the central object, the goal, not only of mundane history but of all that God has been doing in all realms, for all eternity."

-Paul E. Billheimer

DEFINITION

The church is people led together by the Holy Spirit; to be conformed into the image of the Son; in a location where God has placed His name; under anointed leadership.

In other words, the four elements of the local church are: PEOPLE (with a) PURPOSE (meeting at the same) PLACE (submitted to delegated) PERSONNEL (the Five Fold Ministry)

We join the local church to be part of the corporate expression of the life of Christ and to influence the community in which we live with the Gospel- the Good News lived out through our lives.

Leadership

After Christ's ascension from the dead, He outlined how His church was to be led and the job description of those He commissioned to lead. *"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 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."*

Ephesians 4:11-13

The Five Fold Ministry (ordained ministers) are the coaches and instructors in the local church. Their primary responsibility is to train the saints (Christians) in their gifting and callings.

It is to the body of Christ that the privilege and responsibility is given to minister to the needs of others. Leadership qualifications (as outlined in I Tim 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9) include maturity and character as well as a good reputation in the community. Servant Leaders need to be role modeling, teaching, training and imparting the ministry of Christ to all Christians in their sphere of influence.

The local church is to be the training center, the 'spiritual armory' so that Christians have the teaching, encouragement and opportunity to grow in their faith and calling.