

THE CHURCH

I. Announced by Christ (Matt. 16:13-18; 18:17,20), and **Built by Christ** after He was raised from the dead and glorified (Eph. 1:19-23) on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:3-5; 2:1) when the Spirit of God baptized believers into “the one body” of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Since then the Lord has added to the church daily those who are saved (Acts 2:47).

A. **God’s Eternal Purpose** (Eph. 3:11) that all believers today:

1. Be chosen to be holy, and obtain an inheritance by faith (Eph. 1:1,4,11) [Past].
2. Make all men and angels see fellowship of Christ with His church (Eph. 3:9,10; 1:23; Matt. 18:17,20) [Present].
3. Christ will show exceeding riches of His grace (Eph. 2:7), and Church will glorify Christ (Eph. 3:21) [Future].

B. **The Representation of the Church on Earth is Twofold:**

1. The Local Assembly of believers who “are gathered” by the Spirit of God by the Word unto all Christ’s name stands for (Matt.18:17,20; 1 Cor.1:9), on the ground of “the one body” (Eph. 2:16).
2. The truth of the “one body” necessitates the Unity of Assemblies (1 Cor. 1:2; 4:17; etc.). [This is the purpose of letters of commendation between assemblies (Acts 9:26, 27; 18:27; 2 Cor. 3:1; Rom. 16:1).]

C. **The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance in Christ** (Eph. 1:11-14).

1. Reveals the truth of the Church (Eph. 1:17,18)
2. Enables the church to function (Acts 2:4, 1 Cor. 14:15) with a dual ministry:
 - a. To the unsaved and to the saved (Acts 26:16,18; Col. 1:23-25).

II. The Church as “the one Body”—Christ as Head (Eph. 1:22,23; 2:16; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:27).

A. **Christ should be held as Head by obeying His Word** (Col. 2:16-19; 1 Cor. 11:1-16). The headship God established in creation (v. 3) is to be maintained in the assembly (v. 16), and wherever prayer and prophecy are made (v. 4-10). Man is God’s designated representative of Himself publicly (v. 7).

B. **The Spirit’s presence in the assembly is to direct its function** (1 Cor. 3:16,17; 14:15,26; Acts 2:4).

C. **Gifts have been given to each member by God** (Rom. 12:3-8); **Christ** (Eph. 4:11-16); **and the Spirit of God**, that all may profit and “have the same care one for another” (1 Cor. 12:4-31).

D. **The sense of Divine love causes the body to function smoothly** (1 Cor. 13).

E. **The functioning of the assembly** (1 Cor. 14).

1. Everything is to “be done decently and in order (vs. 33,40).
2. “With the spirit,” and “with the understanding also” (v. 15).
3. Women are to keep “silent” in the assembly meetings (v. 34).
4. Assembly Meetings are indicated by the expression: “When ye are gathered together”:
 - a. Discipline (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5).
 - b. Prayer (Matthew 18:19,20; Acts 4: 31).
 - c. Remembrance of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:20, 23-26; Acts 20:7).
 - d. Ministry of the Word (1 Corinthians 14:23,29).

III. The Church as the House of God—Christ as Lord (Eph. 2:19,20; 1 Tim. 3:14,15; Heb. 3:6) is composed of all the saints at any given moment on earth, forming the “habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22) for the blessing of His people and testimony to the world (1 Tim. 3:15,16). God’s house is a place for Him to dwell in (2 Chron. 6:2), and is made up of “lively stones” (1 Pet. 2:5).

- A. **Holiness is of first importance in God’s house** (Psa. 93:5; Eze. 43:12), therefore, we must refuse all conduct contrary to sound teaching (1 Tim. 1:3-10).

- B. **Responsibility for the order of God’s house has been placed into the hands of man** (1 Cor. 5:12,13; 1 Pet. 4:17), therefore all in the house must be dependent upon God and subject to His authority as shown in the Word (1 Tim. 3:14,15; examples: 2:1-5,8,11,12).

- C. **The house is to be marked by oversight and care** (1 Tim. 3:1-13). Elders (or guides) are to be recognized for their “work’s sake,” and submitted to (1 Thess. 5:12,13; Heb. 13:7,17,24), but “Not being lords over God’s heritage” (1 Pet. 5:1-5).

D. Assembly Discipline

- 1. **The whole assembly is responsible to receive, put away, and restore to fellowship at the Lord’s supper** (1 Cor. 5:4,12; Matt. 18:17,18,20).

[Note: As there must be positive reasons for denying fellowship and restoration to fellowship, so there must be positive reasons for receiving. Reception is into a fellowship of what we believe to be of God. So the assembly must make a careful examination of one desiring fellowship (1 Tim. 5:22). The doctrine regarding the bread and cup at the remembrance meeting is given in 1 Cor. 10:16,17.]

2. To be received by the assembly, the person must:

- a. Be saved by having fellowship with the blood of Christ (the blood mentioned first in 1 Cor. 10:16), and have the assurance of salvation (2 Tim. 1:12).

- b. Desire to express fellowship with the body of Christ by taking the bread (1 Cor. 10:16,17). [The assembly is for those who wish to take the responsibility associated with the assembly of God (Eph. 4:1-3,12).]

- c. Have no:
 - (1) Unjudged moral sin in life—but a consistent walk (1 Cor. 5:6).
 - (2) False teaching—but right teaching (Gal. 5:9).
 - (3) Association with what is not Scriptural (Hag. 2:12,13).
 - (a) Yoke with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-18).
 - (b) Associated with false teaching (1 Cor. 15:12,33).

3. Reasons for the need of discipline

- a. False prophets creep in unawares (Matt. 13:25; Acts 20:29-31).
- b. The flesh in the believer (Gal. 5:13-21).
- c. The world creeping into the believer’s life (1 John 2:15-17).

4. The object of discipline

- a. The Lord's honor and glory (1 Cor. 5:7,8; 6:19,20; 14:40).
- b. The destruction of the flesh (1 Cor. 5:5).
- c. The restoration of the offender (1 Cor. 5:5).
- d. To clear the assembly (2 Cor. 7:11). (When Achan sinned, all Israel was responsible (Josh. 7:1,11).)

5. Degrees of discipline. A person who is:

- a. "Overtaken in a fault" restore by spiritual means—meekness is required (Gal. 6:1,2).
- b. "Unruly" is to be warned; fainthearted, comforted; weak, sustained; patient to all (1 Thess. 5:12-14).
- c. "Disorderly" is to be withdrawn from; disobedient, have no company with (2 Thess. 3:6-15).
- d. A sinner is to be rebuked before all (1 Tim. 5:19-21; Gal. 2:11-14).
- e. A "heretic" is to be rejected after the first and second admonition (Titus 3:10,11; 1:10,11; Rom. 16:17,18).
- f. Guilty of personal trespass, as in Matt. 18:15-20:
 - (1) Go alone to face the brother with his sin (v. 15).
 - (2) If he does not give up his sin, go to him with one or two others (v. 16).
 - (3) If he still does not give up his sin, tell the assembly (v. 17).
 - (4) If he does not hear the assembly, let him be to you as a heathen (v. 17,18; 1 Cor. 5:12,13).
 - (5) Pray that even yet God will restore him to fellowship with Himself and the assembly (v. 19).

6. Marks of recovery

- a. Humbled by a sense that the sin was against God (Psa. 51:4).
- b. Judgment of the root of sin (2 Cor. 7:8-11; Luke 5:8).
- c. Time of submission to God's governmental dealings (2 Cor. 2:6,7).

[Until there is restoration to God, there can be no restoration to the assembly.]

E. The Church in a Day of Ruin (2 Timothy 2).

1. Three facts we must realize if we are going to walk according to the mind of God today:

- a. We cannot find God's path for His people in the midst of the confusion of Christendom, by human reasoning (1 Corinthians 2:9,10).
- b. God never expected that we would have wisdom or competence in ourselves. The Lord said: "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).
- c. It is a great day when we discover the rich provision God has made so we can be intelligent about His mind.

2. The three provisions we have for a testimony today of the truth of "the one body:"

- a. A Head in Heaven—Christ as Head of His Body the Church, and all wisdom is in Him (Colossians 2:9).
- b. The Holy Spirit, a Divine Person, dwelling in God's people on earth (John 14:16,17).
- c. The Holy Scriptures as our infallible authority (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

3. If we desire to give Christ His rightful place as Head we must:

- a. "Study" the Scriptures to show yourself "approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15).
- b. Separate from everything contrary to the truth of God ["Iniquity" is anything not according to the standard of God's Word.] (2 Timothy 2:15-19).
- c. "Follow righteousness...with them that call on the Lord out of a [undivided heart]" (2 Timothy 2:20-22; Hebrews 13:13).

4. The Lord can then use "a vessel to honor sanctified" to help others (2 Timothy 2:21,24-26).

IV. The Church as a Growing Temple—Christ as The Great High Priest (Eph. 2:21,22; Heb. 2:17; 3:1-6, 4:14, etc.) is composed of all the saints of the whole Christian period, wherein sacrifices of praise ascend to God, and the excellencies of God are displayed before men.

- A. **The local assembly is the “temple”:** dwelling place of the Spirit. He would use each brother as He directs the functioning of the assembly (1 Cor. 3:16-23; 14:15,31; Phil. 3:3, JND).
- B. **All believers as holy priests “offer up spiritual sacrifices” of praise “with one accord”** (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:16; Acts 4:24).
 - 1. We “draw near” with our prayers and worship “into the holiest” where Christ is, “into heaven itself” (Heb. 2:12; 10:19-22; 9:24).
 - 2. And “go forth unto Him outside the camp” of systems of men “bearing His reproach” (Heb. 13:13; John 15:18-21).
- C. **As royal priests we “show forth the praises” of Christ with a dual ministry** (1 Pet. 2:9):
 - 1. Into all the world preaching the gospel (Mark 16:15; Col. 1:23), but “as strangers and pilgrims” in this world, with heaven as our home (1 Pet. 2:11; Phil. 2:20).
 - 2. “And especially unto them who are of the household of faith” which is Christ’s body (Gal. 6:10; Col. 1:24-26).
- D. **The eternal theme of the church is:** “To Him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen” (Eph. 3:21, JND Trans.).

V. The Church as the Lampstand of Witness—Christ as Judge (Rev. 1-3).

Christ as Judge sees all of the professing church from Pentecost to the Rapture, and says: “I have...against thee because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works” (Rev. 2:4,5). All true witness for Christ can only come from communion with Christ. As Jesus said: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19).

VI. The Church as the Wife of Victorious Christ During the Millennium (Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9-27).

After the rapture of the church, and before the marriage supper of the Lamb, “His wife hath made herself ready,” and is arrayed with fine linen, which are her righteous deeds (Rev. 19:7-9). We will be amply rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:13-15; Rev. 3:11,8). Then “clothed in fine linen, white and clean,” she comes to earth with Christ to judge and reign with Him over the world in righteousness (Rev. 19:14).

VII. The Church as the Bride of Christ the Bridegroom throughout Eternity (Rev. 21:1-8; 22:1-5).

Christ “gave Himself” on Calvary’s cross for His bride. Since then He has been sanctifying and cleansing her “with the washing of water by the Word,” and “nourishing and cherishing” her. He now is looking forward with anticipation to the moment when He will present her “to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph. 5:25-29; John 3:29). By His work on Calvary He prepared an abiding place in glory for His people, and throughout eternity “He shall dwell with them” (Rev. 21:1-3). As He tells us in His own words: “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3).