

A STUDY OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT
CHURCH

By Frank Jamerson

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Lesson 1

The Nature of the Church

The church is called by several figurative expressions which indicate its nature.

- I. Kingdom - as to government.
 - A. Designations:
 1. Kingdom of heaven (Matthew 3:2).
 2. Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33; Mark 9:1).
 3. Kingdom of Christ (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 1:9).
 4. Kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13).
 - B. Christ is king (Acts 17:7; 2:29-31; Revelation 3:21).
 1. Monarchy - no voting, all powers in one man.
 2. Democracy - "Government by the people...exercised either directly (absolute, or pure democracy), or indirectly (representative democracy) through a system of representation" (Webster).
 - C. The kingdom is spiritual - not earthly.
 1. Not of this world (John 18:36).
 2. Entered by spiritual birth (John 3:3-5).
 3. Is within man (Luke 17:21).
- II. Body - as to organization.
 - A. Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22, 23).
 - B. All who are in Christ are in the one body (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4, 5).
 - C. Compared to physical body (1 Corinthians 12:12-25).
- III. House of God - as to family.
 - A. God is the Father (Ephesians 4:6; Matthew 6:9; 23:9).
 - B. Christ is the elder brother (Romans 8:17).
 - C. The saved are in the family (1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6).
- IV. Temple of God - as to worship.
 - A. In the Old Testament, it was a physical building (1 Kings 6:1-14).
 - B. In the New Testament, it is composed of human beings (1 Corinthians 3:9, 16, 17; 1 Peter 2:5).

His kingdom, His people

- C. Each Christian is a priest and presents himself as “a living sacrifice” to God (Romans 12:1, 2).
- V. A Vineyard - as to work.
- A. A vineyard is a place of labor, not retirement.
 - B. Those in the vineyard are to work (Matthew 20:1-16).
 - C. It is the Lord’s vineyard (Matthew 21:28-31).
 - D. If we do not produce fruit, we will be cast away (John 15:1-6).
- VI. Church - in relationship to the world.
- A. The Greek word translated church or assembly is ekklesia - called out.
 - B. It is used of the Israelites in the wilderness (Acts 7:38), a mob (Acts 19:32), and a governmental body (Acts 19:39).
 - C. It is generally used of those called out of the world through the Gospel of Christ. (We will study the uses of this word in the next lesson.)

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What does the word kingdom suggest about the nature of the church?

2. To what three things does kingdom relate God’s people?

3. When did Christ’s reign as king begin?

4. Contrast Christ’s kingdom with human kingdoms.

5. Of what is Christ the head?

His body, His bride

6. How do we enter the one body?
7. What does God expect of each member of the body?
8. As a family, what is our relationship to God and to Christ?
9. What is the house of God?
10. Is the church a physical building?
11. What does the figure of a temple suggest to you?
12. What do you think is the point of Jesus' parable in Matthew 20?
13. What are some of the fruit that we must bear for Christ?
14. What does "ekklesia" mean?
15. What does it imply about our lives?

Lesson 2

Uses of the Word Church

The words church, assembly, and congregation are collective nouns and may refer to any called out group. (Either could properly be used to translate the Greek word.) The Bible speaks of the church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38), the mob assembled in Ephesus (Acts 19:31, 32) and a governmental body (Acts 19:40, 41), as ekklesias.

The word church, when speaking of the saved, views them as an assembly whether they are physically assembled or not.

- I. All the saved - the universal church.
 - A. In this sense, there is one church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4, 5; 1:22, 23).
 - B. They have been called out of the world (2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 4:15), baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13) and subscribe to one head (Colossians 1:18).
 - C. The universal church is composed of Christians, not congregations. Local churches are also composed of Christians.

- II. The saved in a location - the local church.
 - A. Each congregation (church) is of Christ or of God, not a congregation of the congregation of Christ.
 - B. In relationship to God there are churches of God (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Timothy 3:15).
 - C. In relationship to Christ there are churches of Christ (Romans 16:16).
 - D. In location they were: of Galatia (1 Corinthians 16:1), of Judea (Galatians 1:22), of Asia (Revelation 1:4).
 - E. In composition they were: of Gentiles (Romans 16:4), of Thessalonians (1 & 2 Thessalonians 1:1).

- III. Local churches acted as units.
 - A. The church at Philippi sent support to Paul (Philippians 4:15-18).
 1. No church communicated with Paul but Philippi only (verse 15). They acted as a unit, though not everyone had to go to take the contribution.
 2. Later they sent again to Paul, while he was in Rome, through the

His body, His bride

hands of Epaphroditus (verse 18).

- B. The church in Corinth came together in one place (1 Corinthians 14:23).
 - 1. This is the assembly assembled, or the congregation congregated, or the church churched!
 - 2. “In the church” refers to the assembly in verses 19, 28, 33, and 34.
 - 3. The church of God at Corinth was addressed as an entity - whether it was assembled or unassembled (1 Corinthians 1:2; cp. Acts 14:27).
 - 4. The only sense in which Diotrophes could put anyone out of the church (3 John 9) would be the local church. He could not remove anyone from the Lamb’s book of life.
- C. The church is to relieve its needy (1 Timothy 5:16).
 - 1. The “it” refers to the unit - the collective group.
 - 2. The church in Jerusalem selected seven men to look after certain widows (Acts 6).
- D. The church, as a unit, acts in discipline.
 - 1. Matthew 18:15-17 - The church here must be the local church, for it is the only group authorized to practice this discipline.
 - 2. The church has a duty to withdraw from disorderly members, but not from every member in the world who walks disorderly (1 Corinthians 5).
 - 3. These actions of the group (unit) are performed by individuals, but not every action of individual members of a group is the action of the group.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

- 1. Give three words that could translate ekklesia.

- 2. How do we get into the universal church?

His kingdom, His people

3. How many of the saved are in it?

4. What is the difference between a church of God and a church of Christ?

5. What is wrong with the expression - congregation of the church of Christ?

6. Prove that the church in Philippi was not just a group of Christians acting independently.

7. Prove that “in the church” may mean the church assembled.

8. Does the local church exist if it is not assembled?

9. Prove that not every good work of individuals is a function of the local church.

10. How did Jesus show the difference between an individual or individuals acting independently, and the church?