

Di223 We Believe

Lesson Di223-20 The Church Is Born

How would you answer if someone asked you, “What is the church?” The word ‘church’ has three meanings? It can mean a church building, the group of Christians who meet in a building, or all the Christians in the world. The Bible uses the word ‘church’ to mean both the local group of Christians who meet together and all Christians everywhere.

The worldwide Church began on the Day of Pentecost when God poured out the Holy Spirit on 120 believers. A crowd gathered to see what was happening. Peter explained that the people speaking in languages they had not learned, had been filled with the Holy Spirit.

Three thousand people were saved and baptized in water that day after Peter preached the first sermon after Pentecost. Church buildings in which believers could meet had not yet been needed. Believers gathered in homes to worship and learn more about God. After the Day of Pentecost, there was a clearly defined group of Spirit-filled believers called the ‘Church.’

Mary, mother of John Mark, opened her home in Jerusalem for the believers to hold their meetings. Cornelius, a centurion in the Italian Regiment in Caesarea, invited Peter to speak to a group in his home. The Holy Spirit was poured out on all who were there. Lydia, a new convert in Philippi, opened her home to believers. Believers were also meeting in Troas where Eutychus was raised from the dead. He had fallen out of an upper window as Paul had preached late into the night.

The New Testament was first written in the Greek language. Two important Greek words describe the church. One word is *ecclesia*, which means “an assembly of called-out ones.” This word is used in the New Testament to refer to 1) a congregation, 2) the whole body of Christians in one location, and 3) the whole body of believers on earth. The other Greek word is *kuriakos*, which means “that which belongs to the Lord.”

With these two Greek descriptions of the Church, how would we define ‘Church’? The worldwide Church is “an assembly of called-out ones who belong to God.” This shows that the word ‘church’ refers not just to a building. It is all those who are saved and serve God. All believers, no matter where they are located in the world, are part of the worldwide Church. In God’s sight, only one thing counts—that a person has accepted Jesus as Savior. The church organization you belong to cannot save you.

God commanded the Church to preach the gospel to all the world, to teach believers how to grow spiritually, and to worship God. The Bible uses word pictures to help us further understand the Church. The Bible refers to the Church as the family of God, the Lord’s army, the bride of Christ, the light of the world, the salt of the earth, pilgrims, and the temple of the Lord.

The New Testament teaches that Jesus himself is the head of the Church. This truth is emphasized in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. “You are...members of [God’s] household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord (Eph 2:19-21). Paul compared the Church to a human body, made up of many necessary members. He calls it the body of Christ. Paul stated, “We were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body ... you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1Cor 12:13, 27). Paul also explains that

“A body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body” (1Cor 12:12). He also says, “In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Rom 12:5). What a privilege to be part of the body of Christ, functioning with Christ as the head!

In our next lesson, we will discuss the purpose of the Church. Our tenth **Statement of Faith** says: “We believe the Church is the body of Christ with a divinely called ministry. Its purpose is to evangelize the world, worship God, encourage believers to grow in the likeness of Christ, and show God’s love and compassion for all the world.” Our **Memory Verse**: “In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Romans 12:5).

This lesson is **important** because it explains God’s plan for the unity of all who follow Christ. In his eyes, all believers serve as parts of one body. No one part is more important than the other parts. God requires each person to be faithful in the task he or she has been called to.

The **main truth** of this lesson is the meaning of the word ‘church,’ which is “an assembly of called-out ones” and can mean the whole body of Christians in one location and also mean the whole body of believers on earth.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. When did the New Testament church begin? [Pause.]
A. If you answered, “On the Day of Pentecost,” you are correct.
2. Who is the head of the Church? [Pause.]
A. If you said that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, you are right.
3. Name three word pictures the Bible uses to help us understand the Church. [Pause.]
A. If you said any three of the following, “The Church is described as the family of God, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the Lord’s army, the temple of the Lord, or light or salt,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** is to memorize our tenth **Statement of Faith**: “We believe the Church is the body of Christ with a divinely called ministry. Its purpose is to evangelize the world, worship God, encourage believers to grow in the likeness of Christ, and show God’s love and compassion for all the world.” Commit to memory this verse: “In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Romans 12:5). Share the story of how the Church was born on the Day of Pentecost. Tell two other people how they can know they are a part of the Church worldwide.