

“What Is This Thing Called Church?”
“Getting the Most Out of Church” — Part 1
Matthew 16:18

“We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God’s grace through faith alone in Christ Jesus. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers.”

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. Matthew 16:18

1. God’s Gospel creates the church.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:42-47

Saving faith entails a new community!

...Then they (*Paul and Barnabas*) returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith... Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. Acts 14:21-23

2. The nature of the church global and local:

Definition: *The Greek term *ekklesia* translated “church” simply means “an assembly.”*

- **The True Church:** The Bible speaks of the church as the totality of all those united with Christ by faith, resulting in a new standing before God and a new relationship with one another.

...Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... Ephesians 5:23 and 25

- The true Church comprises all who have been justified by God’s grace through faith alone in Christ alone.

Special note on Justification: At the core of the gospel is the good news that God has acted in Jesus Christ to rescue lost sinners from a condition of divine condemnation and wrath into a new relationship of favor with Himself.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand... Romans 5:1-2

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood... Romans 3:22-25

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

- The true Church comprises those who are united by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ.

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:16

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:26-28

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:13-14

- **The Local Church:** We can speak of the true church as known only to God but in general in the New Testament, the church refers to a community visible in the world. More commonly it denotes a local gathering of believers in one place.

***This community of Christians in the local church
is a microcosm of the global or true church.***

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12:27-28

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”

Matthew 18:20

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

John 17:20-23

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

1 Peter 2:9-12

Each local church is to demonstrate to the world something of the truth and beauty of the gospel.

Summary: The gospel creates the church, but the church also proclaims the gospel. And the church proclaims the gospel not simply by what the church is called to do, but in what the church is.

The church is the centerpiece of God's purposes for humanity.

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." Revelation 7:9-10

Without a commitment to the local church, we haven't rightly understood God's gospel.