**What Is the Church?**

**Introduction:**

If you ask ten people on the street, you would probably get ten different answers. People may attend church for different reasons: to meet people, to satisfy social needs, to help their business, to satisfy their spouse . . . Some people attend church to find the “best show in town!” Many churches cater to this mindset. They try to put on the best show in town. They come up with new and novel ways to increase their attendance and offerings. They believe the church with the most people wins! The result is churches with coffee bars, professional worship teams, a large staff, and short sermons designed to make everyone feel good. So what is the biblical view of the church?

**Body:**

1. **The Church Is the Body of Christ**

* Ephesians 1:22-23 “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” NKJV Just as the physical body is dependent upon the head, so the spiritual body [the church] is dependent upon its head [Christ]. “Head” implies authority, rule, and supreme rank. (Colossians 1:18) “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” NKJV This tells us that every member must be in submission to Him.
* This idea of a body also teaches that the church is composed of many types of people with a variety of abilities. (I Corinthians 12:12-27) “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body.’ Is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” NKJV Each member is to use his abilities for the good of the body.
* The church is the living body of Christ due to each member being born again. (I Peter 1:23) “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,” NKJV

1. **The Church Is the Bride of Christ**

* Ephesians 5:22-27 “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanses her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” NKJV Christ loved the church so much that He gave His life for it.
* A life-long commitment is to be made in this marriage. It is a covenant. One enters this covenant when he is immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. (Ephesians 5:26) “that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.” NKJV This verse corresponds with I Corinthians 12:13 “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” NKJV and Galatians 3:27-28. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” NKJV

1. **The Church Is the Family of God**

* The image of the church as a family is seen throughout the New Testament. (I Timothy 3:15) “but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” NKJV The church is the household of God, His family. Just as a family has standards of expected behavior, so does the church. (II Corinthians 6:17-18) “Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.’ ” NKJV
* God is our mutual Father and Christians are brothers and sisters. (Hebrews 2:11-13) “For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: ‘I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assemble I will sing praise to You.’ And again: ‘I will put My trust in Him.’ And again: ‘Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.’” NKJV
* Families get together regularly, or they should. (Hebrews 10:24-27) “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.” NKJV The 1st Century church gathered to pray, sing, learn scripture, partake of the Lord’s Supper, and give of their means. They edified and encouraged one another.

1. **The Church Is the Temple of God**

* Ephesians 2:21-22 “in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” NKJV God’s abode is not in a physical building, but rather in the church. God dwells in our midst and we must be holy in our behavior.
* I Corinthians 6:19-20 “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” NKJV Each believer’s body is a temple and thus we should never do anything that degrades it. This is true of the entire church. (I Corinthians 3:16-17) “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” NKJV This scripture is a stern warning from Jehovah not to corrupt the church in any way.

**Conclusion:**

From all we have seen today, the church is not someplace you go occasionally if you don’t have something better to do. The church consists of those who believe in the gospel and are committed to following it. The church is not about how fancy the building is, how much the weekly contribution is, or how much power the members have in the local community. The church is devoted to the Lord Jesus and in carrying out His will on earth.

[The seed for this lesson came from Steven Cole.]

Bobby Stafford June 11, 2017