What is the Church?

Introduction

It is always a good thing to review the basics – to go over the core elements of something to ensure you have a sure footing. And so over the next few weeks I would like us to consider the basics – the milk of the word.

In 1 Peter 2:2 we read, *as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,*

We need the pure milk of the word to grow – nothing but the word. Of course, as we can read in Hebrews 5:12 we don’t want to remain stagnant or even go in reverse on our walk with Christ.

Hebrews 5:12 says, *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.*

We want to mature and grow, becoming spiritually wiser and more knowledgeable – moving on to meatier, more advanced studies and digesting the “solid food” of the word. But it is still good to review the basics and ensure that we have not fallen backwards – that we are still aware to the basic pillars of our faith. As we read in 1 Peter 2:2, we want to use this milk to grow – sometimes we may pick up on something we missed on the many other times we covered a topic.

And so over the next few weeks I would like us to take a look at the church. If everything goes as planned, we will hopefully cover many different aspects of the church like the various requirements for entering the church. And what is it that we actually do in the church – or in the assembly. What can we get out of the church – what does being in the church do for me?

But to start – to kick of this lesson series – let’s simply take a look at answering the question: what is the church? What is it that we are actually going to be talking about over the next weeks, Lord willing?

The Church is Not A Building

If you look up a quick definition of church online, you get definitions like “a building used for public Christian worship” or “a hierarchy of clergy of a Christian organization”. Most people will in fact picture a building with a steeple when thinking of church, but we can look at the scriptures to know that this is not the case. The church – the one church – is not a building. Consider…

**Rom. 16:5**

* Paul says in this letter to the Romans, to greet the church – first thing in the morning when people arrive for services, many greetings are issued – friendly chatter starts up – but I don’t think I ever recall anyone ever greeting this building
* Of course, Paul is not asking the readers to greet their building – in fact, he even gets more detailed by stating to greet the church *that is in their house*
* Paul is referring to the people in the building – in this case, in their house – he is referring to them as the church
* So right off the bat we see that the church is not a building, but is the people and we can take a look at another passage to see the same thought…

**Acts 2:40-47**

* We see these people – the church - meeting house to house – nothing special about the location – it is not just certain, special buildings that we can worship in – because we are the church
* The Lord adds to the church - not us – we don’t decide who can and cannot enter God’s kingdom – we read in verse 47 that the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved
* We can show people the way in by showing them salvation in Christ, but at the end of the day we can’t force people into the church, nor can we force people out of it – because the church is not ours
* It is Christ’s church…

The Church is Christ’s

**Eph. 1:22-23**

* Christ is head of the church – all things have been put under Christ – and that includes the church – He has been given the authority and power over all things in regards to the church
* Jesus Christ is our King, and we are His body – for the church is the body of Christ

**1 Cor. 12:27**

* We are Christ’s body – we are a part of Christ’s church – we who are followers of Christ are also members of His church – we get added to that church by God when we are saved, as we read in Acts 2
* And yet we are still individuals – we read that we are individual members – we don’t all of a sudden become a mindless herd – while we gain common ground in Christ, we remain unique individuals

**Eph. 5:23**

* Christ is indeed the head of the church and He loves His body for He is like a husband to the church and He has given His life for her
* Jesus is our Saviour and He is the Saviour of everyone in the church – one of those things that we have in common in this family that we join is that we share the same loving Saviour – our redemption story is the same as everyone else’s: Jesus died for me – Jesus died for all

**Matt. 16:13-18**

* The church is built on Christ – the Son of God – the fact that Jesus is God’s only begotten Son – this truth is what the church is built on
* And what better foundation can we ask for then for God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour and King?
* Jesus refers to this truth and foundation as a rock – the church is built on something sturdy and formidable – it is strong and will not be moved
* Christ says that even the gates of Hades would not prevail against it – and we can take comfort, knowing this to be true, as Jesus conquered death and provides and escape from death for everyone in His church
* Christ has created a strong church – a house on the rock…

**Matt. 7:24-27**

* Those who hear and obey Christ have a strong and sturdy foundation – we can’t hope to build a home on any other foundation and have it remain standing
* Those who follow Christ don’t even need to build their own home, as we are brought in to a home that is already built on a rock – a home built by the greatest builder
* When added to the church, we enter into a structure whose foundation will hold strong and remain firm for all eternity
* The church is built on Christ, and the church is built for all

The Church is For All

**1 Cor. 12:12-31**

* The church is universal and welcomes all – just like the physical body that has all sorts of different parts working together – each part having a different function, but all being a part of the body, so it is with the spiritual body of the church
* As mentioned earlier, we are each unique individuals – we have different backgrounds, experiences, talents, and capabilities – but that just makes it all the more amazing a place to be in – it shows how great and expansive Christ’s church is, in that it can incorporate anyone and everyone – as long as they are willing to hear and follow Christ
* In fact, it is good that we are each different and each bring something different to the table – Paul makes the comparison to the physical body: if we only had an eye, how could we hear?
* We can’t all be up front teaching – we need people to encourage, people to pray, people to sing, people to give aid or manage finances
* Of course, we can help with multiple things, striving to be a jack of all trades, but we each have various natural gifts that we would do well to take advantage of

**Rom. 12:3-8**

* We all have a part that we can play in the church – we all have been blessed with gifts that we can use to aid the church
* For some people it may be in planning or managing, for others it may be teaching and preaching, for some it may be a willingness to give or to show kindness and cheerfulness to others
* Remember that the being in the church isn’t just a practice of knowledge, but of emotion as well – it is important to have good teachings, but it is also important to be surrounded with good and cheery attitudes – our presence here in this building is encouraging to me – and I’m sure to everyone here

**Eph. 4:11-13**

* We build up the body with our various roles and talents – we have already talked about how we each have different talents and abilities that we can use in the church – we have been blessed and we want to be good stewards of these gifts that we have been blessed with
* These gifts – when used – build up and edify the church – they aid each other and also aid ourselves as we strive to increase our faith, knowledge, and unity

The Church is to be Used

Indeed as we all have a part in the Church – we all have something to offer – we also have much to gain from the Church – while we will go into this more in a future lesson, Lord willing – I would like to just briefly mention that this is something that should be taken advantage of.

If we are a part of the church, let’s act like it…

**Heb. 10:24-25**

* Don’t forsake the assembly – we are a part of a grand, large, universal church – but we still shouldn’t disregard or forsake the local assembly
* There is much good that comes from being a part of the Church and gathering together and sharing in our unity in Christ grants us even more blessings
* Let’s not squander this gift – let’s not ignore that we are a part of Christ’s church – if we do so, we’ll likely find ourselves outside of this wonderful body of Christ’s
* So let’s not forsake the assembling together – let’s not forsake each other – let’s not forsake Christ