

# The Nature and Purpose of the Church

## The Church is a Holy Nation

We do not serve the Lord in isolation, but as Christians we form a unit known as the church. The church was created by God and is the greatest institution found on earth.

In the Old Testament God used the nation of Israel as His people. They were separated from other nations to be the Holy people of God.

In the New Testament, the Church is God's "holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9). The church is a spiritual nation entered by spiritual rebirth, its citizens coexisting in this world side-by-side with non-citizens and being distinguished by their lifestyle rather than their location.

In the Bible, the word "church" is used to translate the Greek word *ekklesia*, which literally means "called out." To the Greeks, the term referred to an assembly of citizens called out by a herald to discuss and act upon public business.

The gospel call invites us to \_\_\_\_\_ from the world to live a holy pure, and separated life (1 Thess. 4:7; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Peter 1:15).

Called Out of the World to Christ

## The Church is the People of God

1 Peter 2:9-10 shows us how Christians are the people of God. See also 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rom 6:22; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 2:16.

In the church we are a part of a family. God is our Father and every member of the church is His adopted child (2 Cor. 6:18; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6-7).

This leads to the fellowship that we can have only in the family of God (2 Cor 6:14-15; 2 Cor. 6:17).

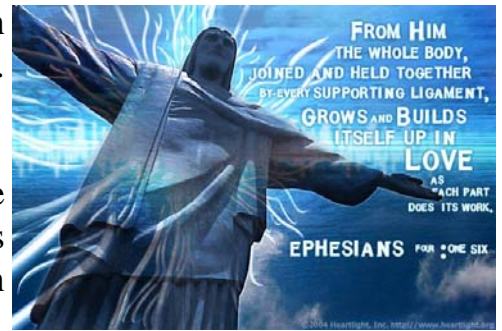


# Introduction to the Christian Faith

## The Church is the Body of Christ

The church is *the body of Christ* (Col 1:18). The church as the body of Christ shows its \_\_\_\_\_ to Him. (Eph 5:23-24; Eph. 1:22-23)

The church as the body of Christ means that it is the \_\_\_\_\_ through which Christ the head fulfills his \_\_\_\_\_ upon the earth. (Luke 19:10; John 10:10, 12:32; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Rom 10:14-15)



The church is the body of Christ meaning that it receives its \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ through the head. (Col 2:19; Eph 4:15-16; John 15:1-6)

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## The Church as the New Israel

Israel was used by God to prepare for the entrance of Christ into the world. Israel and the Church have some major differences. First, the nation of Israel was exclusive, but the church is inclusive even though this was God's plan from the beginning (Genesis 12:3; Gal. 3:8,14; Joel 2:28).

The new covenant is a better covenant (Heb 7:22) with better promises (Heb 8:6) and better sacrifices (Heb 9:23). Ephesians celebrates the transition from the exclusivity of Israel to the inclusiveness of the church (Eph 2:11-3:12)

Israel and the church differ in purpose. While Israel's purpose was preparatory, the purpose of the church is proclamation. The church exists to proclaim that Christ has come (1 Peter 2:9) and to invite the world to participate in all the blessings of salvation he has provided.

What was Old Testament Israel preparing? \_\_\_\_\_

Israel and the Church also differ in essence. Old Testament Israel was a physical entity, the church or the new Israel is a spiritual entity. The church is entered by spiritual rebirth (John 1:12-13; 3:3,5; 1 Pet 1:3, 23). Its members are enrolled in heaven (Heb 12:23). Worship is not limited to a physical location (John 4:22-24). Our enemies are not flesh and blood (Eph 6:12) and our deliverance are from spiritual evil (Matt 6:13; 2 Tim 4:18).



# The Church is the Temple of God

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In a very real sense God lived in the temple in the Old Testament. Certainly He was not confined there, but he set His presence there (Exodus 40:34-35; Psalm 79:1; 1 Kings 8:10).

## Old Testament Tabernacle and Temple

1. The temple was a house for God's name (1 Kings 8:18; 1 Kings 8:29). God's name stands for all his sovereign power.
2. The temple was a house for God's Word. Inside the temple Holy of Holies was placed the ark of the covenant. The only two things in this ark or chest were the two stone tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments.
3. The temple was a house for God's heart (2 Chronicles 7:15-16). Jesus called the temple a house of prayer (Matt 21:13).
4. The temple was a house for God's glory. When the people of Israel realized the temple was a house for the presence of God's glory, they bowed down and worshipped. (2 Chronicles 7:3; 1 Kings 8:11).

## The Church

1. The church is the house for the name of God today. Today Jesus is building a house for his name; he calls it "My Church" (Matt 16:18). This is why the name "Church of Christ" or "Christian Church" is appropriate today.
2. The church is the house for God's Word today. The Bible and the Bible alone is the church's only rule of faith and practice. (Heb. 8:8-11; Acts 2:42).
3. The church is the house for God's heart today. It is the focus of his love; "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph 5:25).
4. The church is the house for God's glory today. The church is the place where the world should be able to see the workings of God in the lives of men. People out to be able to see the reflection of God within the church.

## The Church is a Holy Priesthood

In 1 Peter 2:5 the apostle says that we as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house "for a royal priesthood." In verse 9 he refers to the church as a "royal priesthood." This means that every church member is a priest.

What is the responsibility of a priest? \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Peter 2:9; Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 2:11-12; Matthew 5:16).