

Memory Verse

Ephesians 1:22-23

And He [God] put all things under His [Jesus] feet and gave Him [Jesus] as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

GRACELIFE



CHURCH

**THE CHURCH HAS
LEFT THE BUILDING...**

**PART 1 – WHO IS THE
CHURCH?**

My goal is for us to understand what the *Bible* says a church should "*look like*" and what our roles are within a local fellowship. We talked about our **mission** and **purpose**. Our **mission** is to *Evangelize the Lost, Equip the Saved, and Engage the World*. Our **purpose** is to: *Draw people into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ*. In our desire to achieve these, it's important to *learn* what God says about the church.

A. *Ephesians 2:1-22* - Who is the Church?

The church this letter was written to, had a *problem with unity*. There was tension between the *Jewish and Gentile followers of Christ*. Paul wrote this to Jews and Gentiles. He encourages both, and *reminds them* of many spiritual truths, that are expressed in practical ways.

A. Ephesians 2:1-22 - Who is the Church?

In *chapter 1*, he greets the group in verses 1-2. Then he addresses the Jewish believers in verses 1-12. In verse 13, he talks to Gentile believers, and may begin to mix the groups at the end of the chapter. In *chapter 2* he specifically talks to Gentile Christians.

Ephesians 2:1-22

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - 6and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7so that in the coming ages he might show the

immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

11Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands - 12remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13But now in

Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16and might reconcile

us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20built on the

foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Christ Jesus himself being the
cornerstone, 21in whom the whole structure,
being joined together, grows into a holy
temple in the Lord. 22In him you also are
being built together into a dwelling place for
God by the Spirit.

A. Ephesians 2:1-22 - Who is the Church?

Paul is talking to Gentiles, who, *according to the Law*, were *dead to the things of God*. The phrase, *dead in trespasses*, was a Jewish figure of speech used to *refer to Gentiles* who did not follow God or His ways. Paul reminds these Gentiles of who they once were: ***sinners in the hands of an angry God***. They were *separated from the blessings Israel had* (vs. 12).

A. Ephesians 2:1-22 - Who is the Church?

In *chapters 1 and 2*, Paul says through the blood or death of Jesus Christ, God *brought together Jews and Gentiles* into one new group. Within this new group, Gentiles were fellow citizens of *equal standing* in God's purpose and plan. God *broke down the barrier*, a reference to a wall in the Temple, *reconciling* or ***bringing together*** both Jews and Gentiles to God and each other.

A. *Ephesians 2:1-22* - Who is the Church?

Unity in the church is *not based on* one's preferences, politics, education or lack thereof, financial ability or inability, tradition, and more. True unity is based on the ***truth*** that we have ***Jesus as our Lord and Savior***. Biblical truths influence our preferences, politics, tradition and more. But those are *submitted to Jesus*.

B. *Ephesians 3:1-12* - The Church in God's Plan

One word translated as "*church*" in the NT is "*ekklesia*," or "*called out ones*" or "*assembly*." The English word "*church*" comes from the Greek word - "*kyriakos*," which means "*belonging to the Lord*." *Ekklesia* was used in a Jewish context for an *assembly*, and to combine definitions, "***a called-out assembly by God for a purpose.***"

B. *Ephesians 3:1-12* - The Church in God's Plan

In the *beginning*, God created all things very good. He knew Adam and Eve would sin and *had a plan in place*. That plan involved Israel, through whom the promised Messiah came through the lineage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. However, what *we think of* as the "*church*" did not exist until **after** the *resurrection of Jesus*.

B. *Ephesians 3:1-12* - The Church in God's Plan

The *book of Acts* records the transition from the *Law to grace*, from the *Mosaic Covenant* to the *inauguration* of the *New Covenant*, which has not been fully completed. While the "*church*" was always in God's plan, it was **not revealed** until Paul.

Ephesians 3:1-12

For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles - 2assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. 4When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5which was not made known to the

sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. 6This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

7Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his

power. 8To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, 10so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

11This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

B. *Ephesians 3:1-12* - The Church in God's Plan

Paul mentions similar things in *Colossians*, as he does here in *Ephesians*. The *inclusion of Gentiles* into the *blessings of the New Covenant* - forgiveness and a right relationship with God in the *Jewish Messiah* by grace through faith apart from the Law, *was not known in the Old Testament*.

B. *Ephesians 3:1-12* - The Church in God's Plan

It was written that God would save Gentiles, but the means by which He would save them *was not known until God revealed it to Paul*. It was a "*mystery*." A *mystery* in the New Testament is something always known by God, but not revealed to humanity until a specific point in history. That is the case with *the church*.

B. *Ephesians 3:1-12* - The Church in God's Plan

The church is ***a group of individual Jews and Gentiles who have put their faith in Christ alone for salvation to form one new group, united in Jesus, as a called-out assembly by God for a purpose.*** The purpose is to ***know God, glorify God, love God, become more like the Son of God and declare His salvation among the nations.***

C. The Church Universal

The *Bible doesn't use this phrase*, though there are indications - such as *every tribe, tongue and nation*, etc. Theologians have *defined the words*: The Church Universal, as those who have trusted in Christ since the time of Jesus (though *some incorrectly go before that*), to the present day, until the return of Jesus.

C. The Church Universal

In some of the *old church creeds*, or summary statements of beliefs, the wording of "*one Catholic church*" was used. This can be confusing to Protestant Christians. The word "*Catholic*" in context, meant "*universal*," or the *church universal*. Remember, the "*church*" is not a building, but **people**, and *Jesus is our leader*.

D. The Church Local

Throughout the New Testament, and *specifically Paul's letters*, he, *guided by God through the inspiration of the Spirit*, wrote to local congregations: Rome, those in Galatia, Philippi, and more. These were *local fellowships* of Jews and Gentiles who met in *someone's home*. They *didn't have church buildings*.

D. The Church Local

They came together starting in Jerusalem. The Law was still followed, and before Paul came on the scene, the principles of coming together to study and fellowship are there.

Acts 2:41-47

So those who received his [*Peter's*] word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. 42And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching [*doctrine*] and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the

apostles. 44And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

D. The Church Local

This was before Gentiles were added and the "*church*" morphed into what we think of today. They came to **learn, fellowship, serve each other, pray** and more. At this time, **God did miracles through the Apostles**, to verify this new message that was proclaimed - ***Messiah had come***. They were localized...

D. The Church Local

We are *one local fellowship or assembly*.
What are we doing with *what God has given to us*? I'm not just talking about a building, but Scripture, each other, our abilities, spiritual gifts and more. Are we learning, fellowshiping, praying and serving each other? Fellowship is *more than food... but living life together!*