

**Xenos Christian Fellowship**  
**Christian Leadership 1 - Ecclesiology**  
**Week 1 - What is the Church?**

**Introduction**

Goal of Christian Leadership Classes

Why study theology of the church (ecclesiology)?

How would you define the “church?”

**Traditional Framework –**

“There is a good deal of discussion today about what is necessary to constitute a local church. Is a church simply a gathering of two or three believers in the name of Christ? How much or how little organization is required? Is baptism necessary for church membership? Unfortunately the New Testament does not provide a definition of a local church, but it does describe the normal features of a functioning local assembly. And it is from these regular characteristics of local churches that we can formulate at least a descriptive definition. Taking together the features of local churches we see in the New Testament, we might propose the following definition: A local church is an assembly of professing believers in Christ who have been baptized and who are organized to do God’s will. Notice: (1) There must be a profession of faith - not just anyone can belong to a church. (2) The New Testament knows nothing of unbaptized church members. (3) Churches were always organized as soon as possible (Acts 14:23) - an informal, unorganized fellowship of believers does not constitute a church. (4) There is purpose - doing God’s will which is expressed in many ways (like observing the ordinances, being open and available for ministry to all age groups in all parts of the world, etc.)”

“If this be a reasonably good working definition of the local church, then two or three gathered for fellowship is not a local church since such assemblies are generally not organized nor anxious to minister to all age groups even in their own neighborhoods. Furthermore, a Christian school or extra-church Christian organization does not qualify because of its selective ministry; that is, all professing believers would not be permitted to associate with the institution or organization. Can you imagine a Christian school throwing open its doors to all without any admission requirements? Or can you imagine the problems a youth work would have if retirees could freely enter into its activities? Have you noticed that often today the criticism of the church is coming from those who are associated with organizations whose work would be seriously affected if they had to open their doors to everybody? Naturally, you can be more effective and “successful” if you can be selective, but if you have to try to help people without restrictions, then, like some local churches, you won’t always be successful.”

“Of course, this definition does allow for some flexibility. It does not require that a local church meet in a building specially set aside for such a purpose. It does not indicate what kind of or how many meetings are required to constitute a church. Actually it does not specify the mode of baptism or the particular kind of officers (though perhaps it could and should - more of that later). Principally it tries to differentiate the local church from other groups, even church-related ones.”

Charles Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, “What Is the Church?”, pp140ff

*Thoughts about Ryrie’s views:*

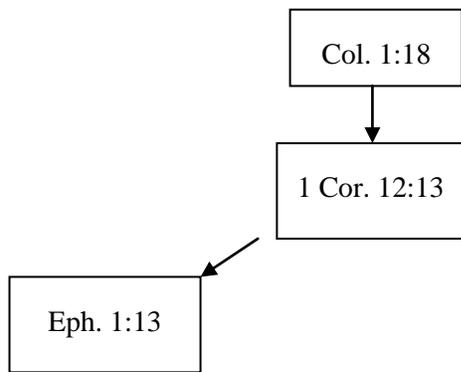
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## The New Testament Definition of the Church

How do we go about defining the church? We look at two things:

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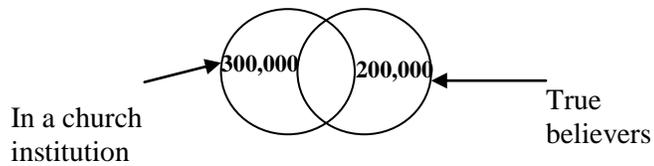
What is the **Universal Church**?



- Col. 1:18
- 1 Cor. 12:13
- Eph. 1:13

THEREFORE, the Universal Church is...

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## Words and metaphors used for the church in the New Testament

### 1. "Church"

- *ekklesia* (*kaleo* – to call & *ek* – out)
- *kuriakon*, which means "dedicated to the Lord."

### 2. "Body of Christ"

- Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians. 12:11-18,27; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:30

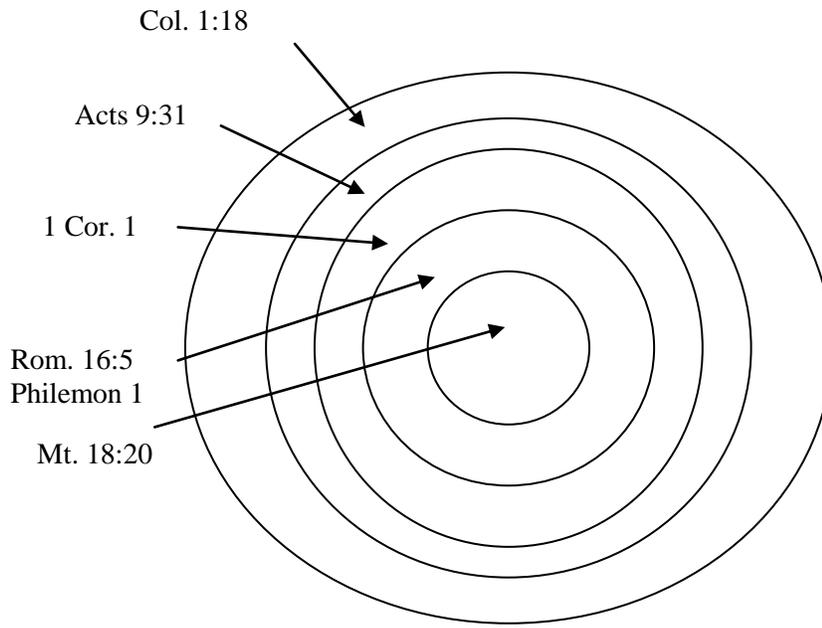
### 3. Other Metaphors and allusions that describe the church.

- *The Temple of God* - 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21,22; 1 Peter 2:5
- *The Jerusalem From Above or The Heavenly Jerusalem* - Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22.
- *Bride of Christ or Christ's Betrothed* - (Ephesians 5:25-32; 2 Corinthians 11:2).

## What is the "Local Church?"

For each of the following verses, answer the question: "*What geographical area is being described?*"

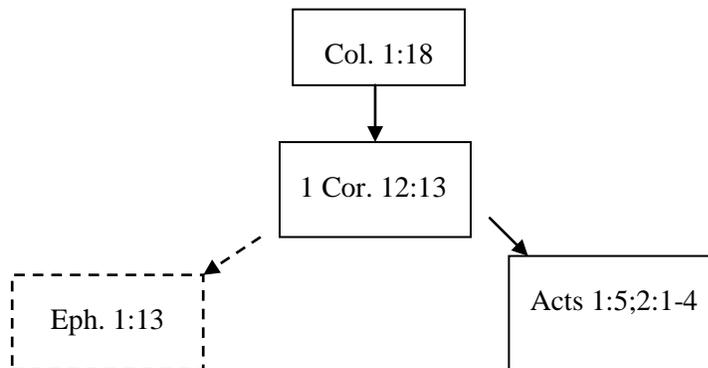
- Colossians 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.
- Acts 9:31 So *the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria* enjoyed peace, being built up; and, going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.
- 1 Corinthians 1:2 to *the church of God which is at Corinth*, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours...
- Romans 16:5 also greet *the church that is in their house*. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. (Philemon 1:1-2) Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker, {2} and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church *in your house*...
- Matthew 18:20 "For *where two or three have gathered together in My name*, there I am in their midst."



What are some implications we can draw from these passages concerning what size or structure a group must have to be considered a “church?”

"What constitutes a local church?"

**The Origin of the Church** (When did the church begin?)

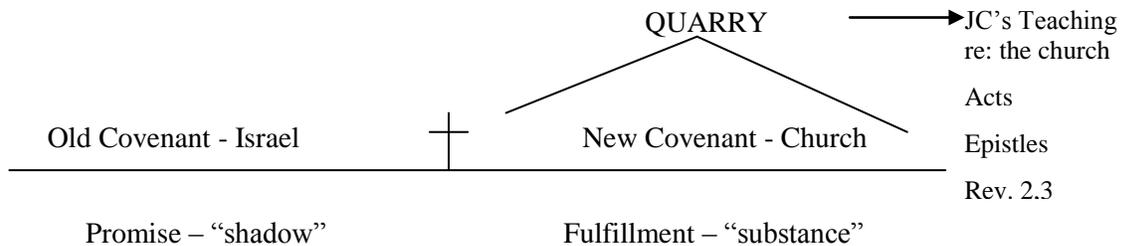


- Colossians 1:18
- 1 Corinthians 12:13
- Acts 1:5; 2:1-4

What parts of the Bible are allowed to use to “build” the church?

Two basic ways to approach this:

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## Confusing the Old Covenant and the Church

### DIRECTIONS FOR WORKSHOP

- Preparation: Review Old Covenant purpose of that structure
- Read New Covenant passages and identify NC status of this structure
- List out the dangers if we ignore the changes, value of the changes, etc.
- Choose a presenter to share your findings with the class.

### Tabernacle/Temple - (Class example)

*Old Covenant Purpose:* The tabernacle was a prophetic picture of God's intent to dwell in his people; his presence dwelt in the building in a unique way. The symbolic events conducted in the tabernacle explained why God could not indwell his people (because of their sins) and how he would one day overcome this problem (by making atonement for their sins through his chosen substitute).

*New Covenant Status:* Now this prophetic picture has been fulfilled. God dwells in every Christian and in the church corporately; the church is the temple of God. (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:4,5) Thus, it is no longer proper to regard any building as the place where God dwells in a special way. See also Exodus 29:43-46; Genesis 26:3; 31:3.

*Discussion:* What negative effects can result from ignoring this change?

## **Priesthood**

*Old Covenant Purpose:* Hebrews 3:1; 4:14 - The high priest was a type of Christ. (Hebrews 3:1; 4:14) For this reason, he alone was permitted to enter God's presence with a sacrifice for the people's sins. The other priests were servants of the temple and could "draw near" to God in a limited way, as well as communicate the knowledge of God to the people. The rest of the people were essentially passive participants in the service of God.

*New Covenant Status:* Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 4:15,16; Hebrews 10:19-22; 1 Peter 2:9

*Discussion:* What negative effects can result from ignoring this change?

## **Sabbath and Festival Calendar**

*Old Covenant Purpose:* God gave the Israelites a full calendar of "holy" days. The Sabbath and the prescribed festivals were largely prophetic pictures of the salvation which Jesus would accomplish. (Colossians 2:16,17)

*New Covenant Status:* Romans 14:1-5; Galatians 4:1-11

*Discussion:* What negative effects can result from ignoring this change?

## **Liturgical Worship Service [week three]**

*Old Covenant Purpose:* Hebrews 8:5

*New Covenant Status:* Hebrews 8:13; Rom. 12:1

*Discussion:* What negative effects can result from ignoring this change?

## **Infant Circumcision**

*Old Covenant Purpose:* Infant circumcision was a ritual given by God to Abraham and his physical descendants. (Genesis 17:9-14) Circumcision was to be the sign that Israel was God's people. It was also a symbol of their need to be liberated from the bondage of their sin- natures. (Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4) God predicted that when Messiah came, he would "circumcise your heart . . . to love the Lord your God." (Deuteronomy 30:6)

*New Covenant Status:* Colossians 2:11 (today's equivalent might be infant baptism)

*Discussion:* What negative effects can result from ignoring this change?

NOTE: Old Covenant ritualism vs. formalism – Is. 29:13,14, Is. 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-24; Heb. 7,8

## **Relationship Between Church and State**

*Old Covenant Purpose:* In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was both a spiritual and national entity. The government of Israel was originally a theocracy, eventually replaced by a theocratic-chosen king. God needed a nation where he could preserve the witness he was accumulating about himself. It was entirely in order for God to call on the government of ancient Israel to operate the nation in a just and godly way.

*New Covenant Status:* Romans 13:1; Matthew 22:17-21; Matthew 13:30; John 18:36

*Discussion:* What negative effects can result from ignoring this change?

“During almost fifteen centuries the legal establishment of Christianity has been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution.” (Quoted in John Seel and Os Guinness, ed., *No God But God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), p. 69)

## **Emphasis on the Law**

*Old Covenant Purpose:* The Old Testament law code was a national contract with Israel which stipulated the conditions by which they could enjoy the land of Canaan. (see Deuteronomy 28) It also had a spiritual value in that it showed them their need for God's grace, which would be given when Messiah came. (Galatians 3:22-25) For both of these reasons, it was entirely proper for Israel to have a "law emphasis."

*New Covenant Status:* Romans 7:6

*Discussion:* What negative effects can result from ignoring this change?

## **Outreach Strategy**

*Old Covenant Purpose:* God's strategy for reaching Gentiles in the Old Testament period was centripetal. As the Israelites stayed in the land and followed the Law, God granted them national security and material prosperity. Foreigners would notice this, and some would thus adopt YHWH as their God. (Deuteronomy 28:7-14; 1 Kings 10:1-12) The main reason for this "stay in the land" strategy was that the Holy Spirit was not operative in the same way he is today, so the Israelites needed to be a separate culture to prevent complete apostasy.

*New Covenant Status:* Matthew 28:18; Acts 1:8

*Discussion:* What negative effects can result from ignoring this change?

## **Conclusion**

## Memory Verses

Understand the inter-relationship of these memory verses to one another in the context of the definition of, and origin of the church.

Col. 1:18\*

1 Cor. 12:13\*

Eph. 1:13\*

Acts 1,2\*\*

## Assignment

Read *Master Plan of Evangelism* Chap 1 (“Selection”) and write a paragraph of personal application.

## Exam Review - Week One

- Know the definition of both the universal and local church.
- Know the 3-step proof that demonstrates what the church is.
- Know the 3-step proof that demonstrates the church began at Pentecost.
- Be able to explain one of the eight areas of confusing the Old Covenant with the church: What was the Old Testament purpose of the area? How has this area changed in the New Testament? What is a negative effect on the Christian life and/or the church of retaining this Old Testament practice?