

What is a Church?

Ephesians 2:19-21

Google: a building used for public Christian worship, or a particular Christian organization

Some: think of church as being similar to a country club – “*We are joining the church to see what we can get out of it. The pastor is to feed us through his sermons. We have specified an acceptable range for sermon length. The music is to fit our style, and any deviations are not acceptable. The programs are for our benefit, and we will determine what we do not like. We are members who expect perks, privileges, and service.*”

Our own church Confession (which nearly matches 1963 Baptist Faith & Message):

Universal: “We believe that **the** Church is the invisible and universal Body of Christ, composed of all of those who have believed the gospel unto salvation. The Church is the bride of Christ, who is its Head and Savior.”

Local: “We believe **a** New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local congregation of baptized believers, ruled and governed only by Christ through His words contained in Holy Scripture, associated by covenant in the Faith and fellowship of the Gospel....”

“19 So then you [“You” - To the saints who are in Ephesus (Eph1:1)] **are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints**

- A specific group (now transformed) are fellow citizens with all Christians – brought to the “new land, new King, new society” by the Gospel of Jesus Christ

19b and members of the household of God,

- **“Household of God” - universal**

- Adoption, Justification, Identity

- **“Household of God” - particular and distinct from “non-family”**

- 1 Timothy 3:14-15 – Paul says, “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things (qualifications of pastors and deacons in v1-13) to you so that, 15 if I delay, *you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.*”
- “*ought to behave*” indicates expectations for conduct
 - 1 Timothy 3:1-13 speaks of exemplary leaders, and this implies a standard for everyone – not exceptions to the rule
- “*church of the living God*” indicates possession, authority, and identity
- “*pillar and buttress of truth*” indicates purpose and mission (next point)

20a (the household of God is) **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,**

○ **Using the “building” metaphor, Paul tells us that the foundation is the apostles and prophets**

- The local church, and the universal church, is to be rooted and grounded in the message of the apostles and prophets.
 - Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...” (Matt 28:19-20)
- This foundation is the only way that a church might fulfill her role as a “pillar and buttress of truth.”

20b Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone (of the household of God)

○ **Jesus Christ is the apex apostle and preeminent prophet.**

- Notice that Christ is mentioned as “part” of the building, and He is the essential “part.”

21 (Christ) **in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.**

○ **Again we are reminded that the ‘structure’ is organic – it is people.**

- The idea is “people growth” – this means unity in & around Christ only

○ **Joined together to “grow in holiness”**

- Christian sinners are sinners like all others, but they ought not celebrate their sin - nor rest easy in it.

22 In him (Christ) **you** (all who are members of the household of God) **also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”**

○ **Notice the passive posture that “you” have throughout**

- You are “built upon a foundation” (v20)
- You are “being joined together” and “growing in Christ” (v21)
- You are “being built together” for “God” (v22)
- All of this is “by the Spirit” (v22)

○ **Notice the motivation and purpose for your joining, growing, building, and membership.**

- That God may “dwell” with/in you!
- **Revelation 21:1-4**