

Lesson  
8

# The Church

There are beautiful buildings and cathedrals, humble adobe missions and huts that have on them the name “Church.” They have steeples and crosses, bells and towers that have their own way of announcing to passers-by, “This is a church.” These man-made structures are churches in one sense of the word, but the church spoken of in the New Testament is something more.

The church in its larger sense is made up of all believers. It is called the body of Christ. God dwells among these believers by His Spirit. In Lesson 7 we studied about the Holy Spirit and some of His functions. One of the functions we did not mention is that He unites the church. Ephesians 4: 3 says, “Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together.”

In this lesson we will study what the church is, what it should be doing, and what is going to happen to it. Again, it is the Bible that will give us the right answers.



**In this lesson you will study . . .**

Its Names  
Its Ordinances  
Its Mission  
Its Future

**This lesson will help you...**

- Describe Christ’s church.
- Be committed to the mission given the church.
- Explain future functions of the church.

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## ITS NAMES

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**Objective 1.** *List several names for the church.*

When you hear the words *body, building, bride, family*, do they suggest something in common? All relate to people and in biblical language these words refer to a specific group of people—those who make up God’s family.

The church is compared to a *body* of which Christ is the head. Colossians 1:18 says, “He is the head of his body, the church; he is the source of the body’s life.”

God put all things under Christ’s feet and gave him to the church as supreme Lord over all things. The church is Christ’s body, the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere (Ephesians 1:22-23).

“All of you are Christ’s body, and each one is a part of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27). The Bible also likens the church to a *building*, a temple dedicated to the Lord.

You, too, are built upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone being Christ Jesus himself. He is the one who holds the whole building together and makes it grow into a sacred temple dedicated to the Lord. In union with him you too are being built together with all the others into a place where God lives through His Spirit (Ephesians 2:20-22).

Another name given to the church is the *bride of Christ*. The Bible calls Jesus the *Lamb* and states that the church is the bride that will be married to Him. Revelation 21:9 says, “Come, and I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” “For the time has come for the wedding of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself for it” (Revelation 19:7). Christ is compared to the husband and the church to the wife in Ephesians 5:25. “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it.”

As you read the Bible you will find other comparisons. The important thing to remember is that the church is made up of all those who are truly born-again followers of Christ. It’s a growing group, “praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And everyday the Lord added to their group those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).



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### For You To Do

- 1** Read the references listed below and write beside each the title it gives to the church.
  - a** Colossians 1:24 .....
  - b** 1 Peter 5:2 .....
  - c** 1 Corinthians 3:9 .....
  - d** Ephesians 2:19 .....

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## ITS ORDINANCES

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**Objective 2.** Name the two ordinances of the church.

Now that we know who the church is, it is important to understand its ordinances. An ordinance is a rule made by an authority. The ordinances of the church are water baptism and communion, which we also call the Lord's Supper.

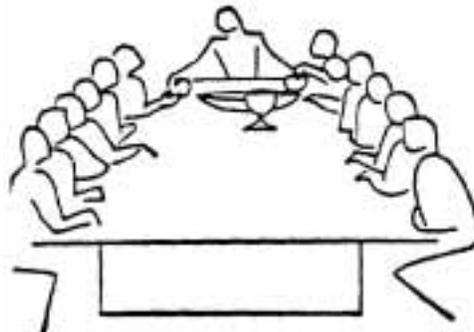
Jesus Himself instituted these two ordinances. His final command to all his disciples was, "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Water baptism has a special significance:

For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ through your faith in the active power of God, who raised him from death (Colossians 2:12).

As a believer you will want to be water baptized as a testimony of your new life in Christ. You will also want to take part in communion.

Communion, the Lord's Supper, or the Last Supper, was the last meeting Jesus had with the 12 disciples before he was arrested by the Roman soldiers. We take communion to commemorate Jesus' death. "This means that every time you eat and drink from this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

For I received from the Lord the teaching that I had passed on to you: that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took the bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in memory of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup and said, "This is God's new covenant, sealed with my blood. Whenever you drink it, do so in memory of me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25).



For You To Do

**2** What are the two ordinances of the church as given by Jesus?

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**3** Choose the answer that best completes this sentence. According to Matthew 28:19, the ordinance of water baptism is for

- a) anyone born into a Christian family.
- b) those who have believed and are following Christ.
- c) joining a church.

- 4 Circle the letter in front of each statement that completes the sentence correctly. Holy Communion is
- a) an ordinance of the church.
  - b) eating the body and blood of Christ.
  - c) remembering the sacrifice of Jesus.
  - d) for every believer.

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## ITS MISSION

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**Objective 3.** *Identify the mission of the church.*

The mission of the church is to preach the gospel to all mankind. Jesus himself gave this commission before He went back to His Father.

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “This is what is written: the Messiah must suffer and must rise from death three days later, and in his name the message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem” (Luke 24:45-47).



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### For You To Do

- 5 Circle the letter in front of each statement that completes the sentence correctly. The mission of the church is to
- a) tell of Jesus’ suffering and death.
  - b) preach repentance and forgiveness of sin.
  - c) tell of Jesus in every nation.

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## ITS FUTURE

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**Objective 4.** *Select statements describing the future of the church.*

Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. For what purpose?

He did this to dedicate the church to God by his word, after making it clean by washing it in water, in order to present the church to himself in all its beauty—pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection. (Ephesians 5:26-27).

The church will be praising God both in heaven and on earth where they will reign with Christ.

You have made them a kingdom of priests to serve our God, and they shall rule on earth... And I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, in the world below, and in the sea—all living beings in the universe—and they were singing. “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be praise and honor, glory and might, forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:10, 13).



**For You To Do**

- 6** Circle the letter in front of the following statements that are TRUE.
- a** There will be nothing to do throughout eternity.
  - b** The church will be with Christ forever.
  - c** The church will serve God as priests and rulers on earth.



## Check Your Answers

- 1 a** His body.  
**b** Flock.  
**c** Field, building.  
**d** Fellow-citizens, God's people, family of God.
- 4** You should have circled a), c), and d). Answer b) is not correct because we do not actually eat the body and drink the blood of Jesus. Bread and wine are symbols of His body and blood.
- 2** Water baptism and communion (or the Lord's Supper).
- 5** You should have circled all of the letters because all are correct.
- 3 b)** those who have believed and are following Christ.
- 6 b** True.  
**c** True.

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Now that you have completed the first unit, you are ready to answer the questions in your student report for *UNIT ONE*. Review the previous lessons, then follow the instructions in your student report for filling out the answer sheet. Send your answer sheet to the address given on the second page of the study guide

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