

LESSON 7 The Church

There are beautiful buildings and cathedrals, 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 the previous lesson 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.

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.

The Plan

- A. Names for the Church
- B. Ordinances of the Church
- C. The Church's Mission and Future

The Goals

1. Describe Christ's church.
2. Identify the two ordinances of the church.
3. Explain the mission and future functions of the church.

A. NAMES FOR THE CHURCH

Goal 1. Describe Christ's 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 the body, the church." Paul noted,

God placed all things under his [Jesus'] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (Ephesians 1:22–23)

"You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27). The Bible also likens the church to a building dedicated to the Lord.

In him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22)

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, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” “For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.” (Revelation 19:7). In Ephesians 5:25 Christ is compared to the husband and the church to the wife.

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 born-again followers of Christ. It is a growing group, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people.

Application

1 Read the references 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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B. ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

Goal 2. Name the two ordinances of the church.

Now that we know who the church is, it is important to understand the ordinances of the church. 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 the disciples was, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Water baptism has a special significance, for we have been buried with Christ in baptism and raised with Him through our faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead (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 His arrest by the Roman soldiers. We take communion to commemorate Jesus’ death. Paul writes,

I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23–26)

Application

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

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3 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.



C. THE CHURCH'S MISSION AND FUTURE

Goal 3. Explain the mission and future functions of the church.

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

He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:45–47)

Application

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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Christ loved the church and gave His life for it “to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:26–27).

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

“I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!’” (Revelation 5:13)

Application

6 Circle the letter in front of the following statements that are TRUE.

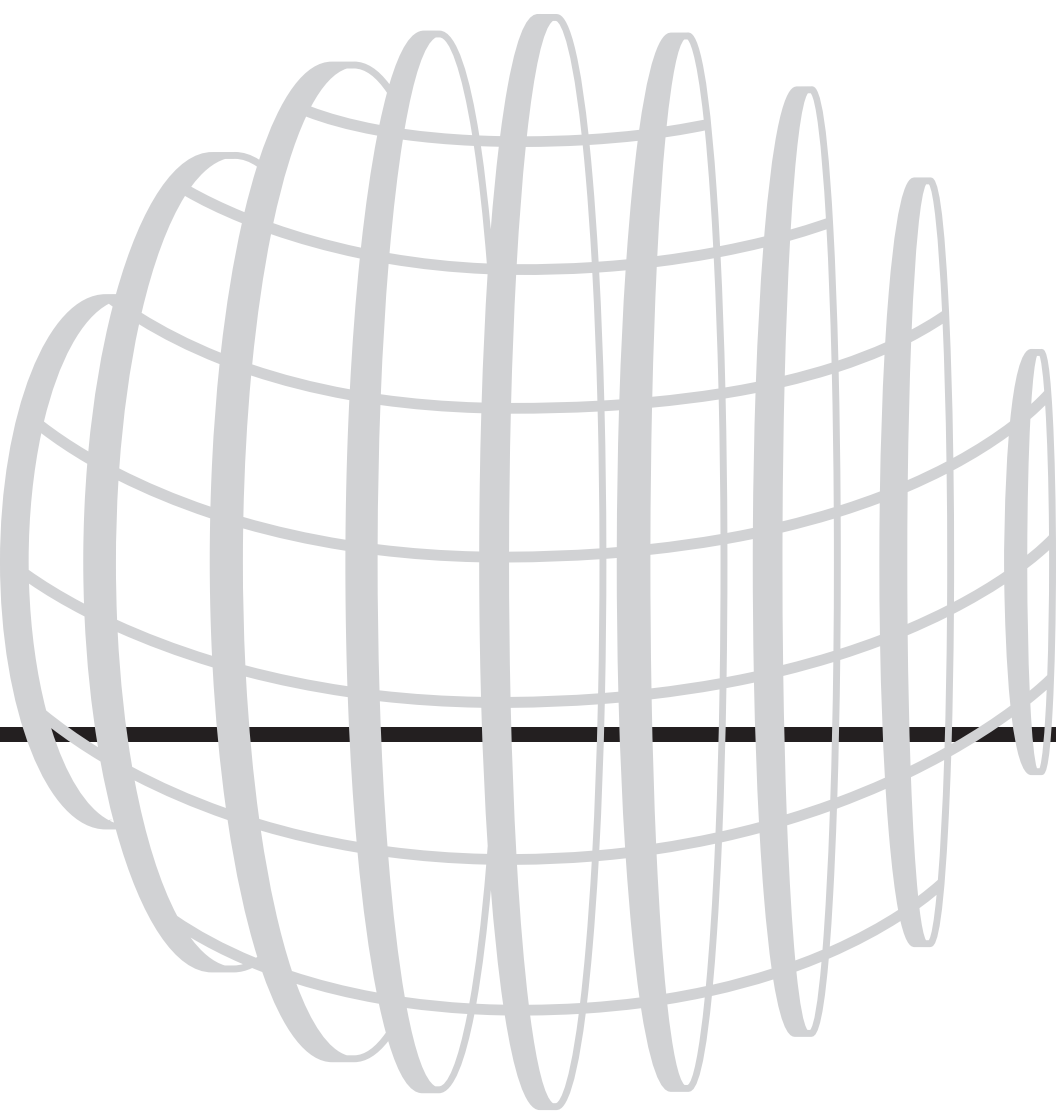
- a)** There will be nothing to do throughout eternity.
- b)** The church will be with Christ forever.
- c)** The church will serve God as priests and rulers on earth.



Check Your Answers

- 1 a** Christ's body
b God's flock
c God's fellow workers; God's field and building
d Fellow-citizens with God's household
- 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)** and **c)** are true

Now that you have completed the first unit, you are ready to answer the Unit One Evaluation. Review the previous lessons, then follow the directions on the Unit One Answer Sheet. You should complete and send your answer sheets to your instructor for corrections.





Lessons

- 8** The Spirit World
- 9** The Future
- 10** The Law of God
- 11** Relating to God and to Others
- 12** The Christian Life
- 13** The Spirit-filled Life