

XI. THE CHURCH

THE BODY AND BRIDE OF CHRIST

☪ I AM THEIR GOD, THEY ARE MY PEOPLE ☪

When thinking of this glorious truth of the cross of salvation and that God has completely finished the work to atone for His people, it brings us back to the very heart of the message of the Bible: the Covenant of Redemption, when God declared “I will be their God, and they will be my people.” Not only did the great Judge miraculously acquit us of wrongdoing when our fate should have been sealed, but in an unlikely act of unprecedented mercy, the great Judge also then adopted us as His.

Imagine, a killer who has been clearly proven guilty, exonerated by a Judge who finds a worthy substitute, and doesn’t just simply free him, but then adopts him in as His own, giving him an inheritance and all the benefits of sonship. This is where we stand as God’s people, the people that He had chosen before the foundations of the world. What a marvelous truth to behold, that we have a completely and totally faithful Father God who will “never leave us nor forsake us.”

But wait. Before we pop open the champagne bottle, we are reminded of something. It seems that there was another; another whom God also had made promises to. Where is she? Has she so rebelled that He finally had enough and left her, only to find a new “people” in the church? Has He replaced her? If He has, is salvation *really* unconditional? And, will He replace us if we don’t remain faithful?

We must ask: what happened to Israel?

☪ ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH ☪

At first glance, this is quite alarming, on many levels really. Firstly, it appears that God has not kept His Word, or that His Word contradicts. Secondly, even if there is some greater plan and purpose in it, it seems odd that He would have two chosen people.

Now, without getting too technical, there are two main, broad “camps” that differ with each other on what, exactly, the relationship between Israel and the church really is. The first camp is called *dispensationalism*.♣ Classic dispensationalists believe that God has dealt differently with mankind through different “dispensations,” in other words, ways that He administered salvation among them. For instance, they would believe that up *until* the Law was given that salvation was by faith and some element of works. Later, during the “dispensation,” or period/administration, of the Law, salvation was then by faith and adherence to the Law. Then, during the time of Jesus, it was only by grace through faith in Jesus. Later, however, during the Great Tribulation, it goes back again to salvation by faith and works (since they would believe that the rapture takes the church to heaven, thus restoring God’s redemptive plan to a “pre-Jesus” way of salvation when the Temple is rebuilt and animal sacrifice is allowed once again).

Even more distinctly, therefore, they would also see that there are two peoples of God: Israel and the church. Their view would be that the church age (Pentecost to modern day) is a parenthetical break in His plan for the redemption of Israel. God put His plan for His bride, Israel, on hold and now turns to the Gentiles, but after the church is raptured, God will return to deal with His bride, Israel, once again.

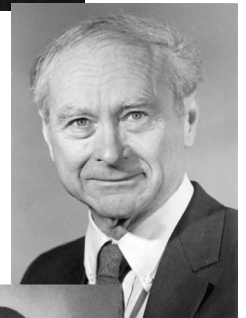
On the other end of the spectrum is what is called *covenant theology*.♣ Covenant theologians believe that the church is neither a parenthesis nor a “break” from Israel (as if God is “on a break” with His bride, Israel, and He is now betrothed to a new people), but that the church is the *continuation* and *fulfilment* of God’s plan for the redemption of His people, Israel. They would see the Bible as one document about one primary overarching Covenant for one salvation for one people. Therefore, they would see that salvation has always been “by grace, through faith,” never of works nor any type of synergism.

There is *so much* to be said about both “sides” and their “sub” categories. For more on this, see the resources I have listed at the end of this chapter.

For now, though, let's again look at a list of the two different "camps":

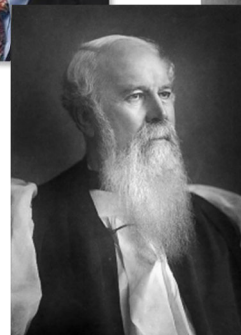
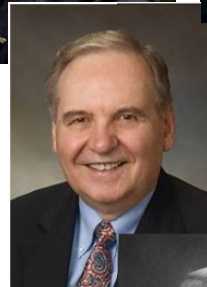
Dispensationalism

- Darrell Bock
- Chuck Smith
- Lewis Sperry Chafer
- R.A. Torrey
- D.L. Moody
- Greg Laurie
- John Nelson Darby: the "father" of this theology
- Jerry Falwell
- Norman Geisler
- Harry A. Ironside
- Tim LaHaye: author of the *Left Behind* series
- Jerry Jenkins
- Hal Lindsey
- Chuck Missler
- J. Vernon McGee
- J. Dwight Pentecost
- Charles Ryrie
- C.I. Scofield
- Chuck Swindoll
- John Walvoord
- Beth Moore
- John MacArthur
- Kay Arthur



Covenant Theology

- John Piper
- Meredith Kline
- J.I. Packer
- John Stott
- Leonard Ravenhill
- Martin Luther
- John Calvin
- C.H. Spurgeon
- Matt Chandler
- Paul Washer
- Jonathon Edwards
- Wayne Grudem
- Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones
- Tim Keller
- Matt Chandler
- R.C. Sproul
- D.A. Carson
- Richard Baxter
- Bruce Ware
- Conrad Mbewe
- Philip Ryken
- J.C. Ryle



It's time to play "Name That Theologian" again!

From the list at left, guess who is who!

(Answers on page 291)

Before going any further, let's look specifically at what the Word says about the nature of God's covenant people, specifically with the question of "the church and Israel" in mind. Also, it would be important here to make clear that this also is an "open handed" doctrine. As a church (not only the corporate church but even our church), we need not agree completely on this. Though it will largely affect how you see, read, and study the Word, and it will also affect much of your theology, as well as how you interpret every day global events, by and large the tenants of our faith remain intact. Concerning Israel, the Roman Christians were asking the same questions to Paul, who himself was a Jewish Pharisee before his conversion to Christianity. So here in **chapter 11**, he asks them back their own question with his answer.

Romans 11.1-10

¹ I ask, then, has God rejected his people? *By no means!* For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not rejected his people *whom he foreknew*. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? ³ "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." ⁴ But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." ⁵ So too at the present time *there is a remnant, chosen by grace*. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise *grace would no longer be grace*.

⁷ What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect ["true" Jews who believed through faith] obtained it, but the rest [ethnic Jews by birth but not in heart] were hardened, ⁸ as it is written,

"God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day." ⁹ And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; ¹⁰ let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever."

Romans 9.6-8

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

So just because you are Jewish doesn't mean you're Jewish? How does this make sense? Who is this "remnant" who are children of the promise?

Deuteronomy 10.16, 17

¹⁶ Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. ¹⁷ For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe.

Deuteronomy 30.6

⁶ And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, *so that* you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. [emphasis mine]

Jeremiah 4.4

⁴ Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem...

Romans 2.28, 29

²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

So what does this mean? It means that "Israel" in the truest sense of being "God's covenant people" are *all* believers of *all* time who were called and saved *by grace through faith*, not by works of the Law or simply by being physically born Jewish. God's children are those who are spiritually born, not merely physically born. So, whether Old Testament or New Testament, Jew or Gentile, God's people are those that believe in His Son by grace through faith. It means that God did *not* abandon Israel, He has remained 100% faithful to her. It means that the church has *not* replaced Israel, but the Word rather says this about the New Testament church, specifically of Gentiles:

Ephesians 2.11-22

¹¹ Therefore 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— ¹² remember 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. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by 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, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Ephesians 3.4-13

⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which 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. ⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body [which same body? The body of Christ which is “true Israel”], and partakers of the promise [the promise made to Israel] in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.

⁷ Of 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. ⁸ To 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, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. ¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

Romans 4.9-12

⁹ Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Romans 8.25-27

²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ ” ²⁶ “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’ ” ²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,

Jesus also spoke of this happening.

John 10.16

¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Galatians 3.28, 29

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

Romans 10.9-13

⁹ If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is

saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Philippians 3.3

³ For we are the circumcision [true spiritual Jews], who worship *by the Spirit of God* and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh [deeds, ethnicity, works, or outward signs, only the inward sign: the Holy Spirit].

In **Philippians 3.3** above Paul specifically says that those who “are the circumcision,” which was a euphemism for “Jew,” were not people who bore the outward “seal” of physical circumcision, which were simply ethnic Jews, but those who are circumcised in their hearts, by grace through faith, who have the *indwelling* seal of redemption, the Holy Spirit. These are the “true Jews” who worship “in Spirit and in truth.”

Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved.
There is no distinction. He has made us a single people. One church.

The Word makes it clear that we Gentiles have been “grafted in” to the “olive tree” which is Israel. The Word sees the church as being one with true Israel, and therefore we should consider ourselves now also to be the true “Israel” whom God had called and chosen to be His people.

SO WHAT ABOUT ETHNIC ISRAEL?

So, we see that God has not given up on Israel, He has not turned aside from Israel, and He has not moved on from her, but rather, He has saved all those that were a part of national, ethnic Israel whom He had called and chosen to be grafted into true spiritual Israel. We see Paul make this even more clear in these verses:

Romans 9.30-33

³⁰ What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³ as it is written,

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

Paul here says that the ethnic, unbelieving Jews missed out because they stumbled on a stumbling stone. What is the stumbling stone? It is Jesus. Why is He called a stumbling stone? Because the proud cannot accept Him, as His salvation is by grace through faith. Those who want to take some credit for their salvation, as the Jews who wanted to attain righteousness through the Law or their ethnicity, will trip over His grace. His death flies in the face of those who want to take some credit for their own righteousness.

Again, this takes us back to the last couple of chapters as we have spoken of unconditional election, God’s sovereign grace, and our total inability to choose because of our sin. This is so difficult for us to accept, because our pride, ego, and understanding gets in the way. We stumble over the concept of grace, as well as the thought, as we saw in the last chapter that Paul Washer said, that “the only thing we contribute to our salvation is our sin.” It is offensive to us.

Romans 4.16-18

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸ In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.”

Furthermore, Paul says this about Jews on this side of the cross that deny Jesus:

Romans 11.28

²⁸ As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake.

Just as so many Jews in the Old Testament times denied the power of God and refused to submit to Him, but based their salvation simply on their national heritage, so do Jews on this side of the cross also reject their Messiah. Being Jewish by ethnicity does not get you a hall pass. Jews, like Gentiles, have always been and still are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Outside of Jesus Christ, there is no salvation for the Jews. Paul says, heartbreakingly, that they have become enemies of God.

But Paul adds a very interesting phrase at the end. He says they have become enemies “for your sake.” For whose? For the Gentiles’ sake. What He means is that because of the hard-hearted Jews, God has offered salvation to the Gentiles. So again we ask, is God done with national/ethnic Israel? Let’s see what Paul has to say:

Romans 11.11-18

¹¹ So I ask, did they [ethnic Jews] stumble in order *that they might fall*? By no means! Rather through their trespass *salvation has come to the Gentiles*, so as to make [ethnic/physical] Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their [ethnic Jews] trespass means riches for the world [Gentiles], and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? ¹⁶ If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you [Gentiles], although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you [Gentiles] who support the root [Israel], but the root [Israel] that supports you [Gentiles].

So Paul says “by no means!” have they completely fallen from the potential of saving grace! As a matter of fact, the stumbling of the notoriously rebellious ethnic Israel has resulted in the freely accepted salvation of those who were outside of the covenant, and when those who “were not God’s people” then “become God’s people,” it will stir a jealousy upon realizing that they missed the Messiah! Will it be too late, though? No! Look what Paul says here about unbelieving ethnic Israel’s potential for salvation through Jesus Christ:

Romans 11.23, 24

²³ And even they [unbelieving ethnic Jews], if they do not continue in their unbelief [rejecting Jesus as Messiah], *will be grafted in*, for God has the power to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you [Gentiles] were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree [Gentile paganism], and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree [the commonwealth of true, spiritual Israel], how much more will these [ethnic but unbelieving Jews], the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree [the true commonwealth of Israel].

So Paul says that if the pagan Gentiles have a chance of being grafted into spiritual, true Israel, then *surely* ethnic Israel can be grafted into spiritual, true Israel! He is saying that even Jews who are “not really” Jews in their hearts *can* and *will* become Jews in their hearts, but not by their own works or observing of the Law, but like everyone else, *by grace through faith in Jesus Christ!*

But wait a second. If Gentiles are grafted into the olive tree of Israel, and even ethnic Jews need to be grafted into the olive tree of Israel...what, or who, *is this olive tree of Israel?* Is it Abraham? Is it Moses? Is it David?

Of course not; it can’t be any of them, because even *they* needed to be grafted into the olive tree of true Israel. Rather, we see a great mystery being unveiled. God has indeed remained faithful to Israel, because we learn an incredible truth:

Jesus is the True Israel.

God made a promise to Israel, but sadly, they *all* broke God’s Law and were cut off, and all have fallen short. However, God said He would save a remnant. He sent His own Son so that there could be *one single Israelite* who would be able to procure the blessings of God made to Israel, and now anyone who is *in Him*, who is the *True Israel of God*, the one and only faithful Israelite that ever walked the earth and earned the promises made to Israel, is grafted into Him in order to receive the full covenant blessings of sonship and citizenship in the commonwealth of Israel.

Consider this example of a “shadowy hint” we see in this Old Testament prophecy being fulfilled:

Matthew 2.13–15

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “*Out of Egypt I called my son.*” [emphasis mine]

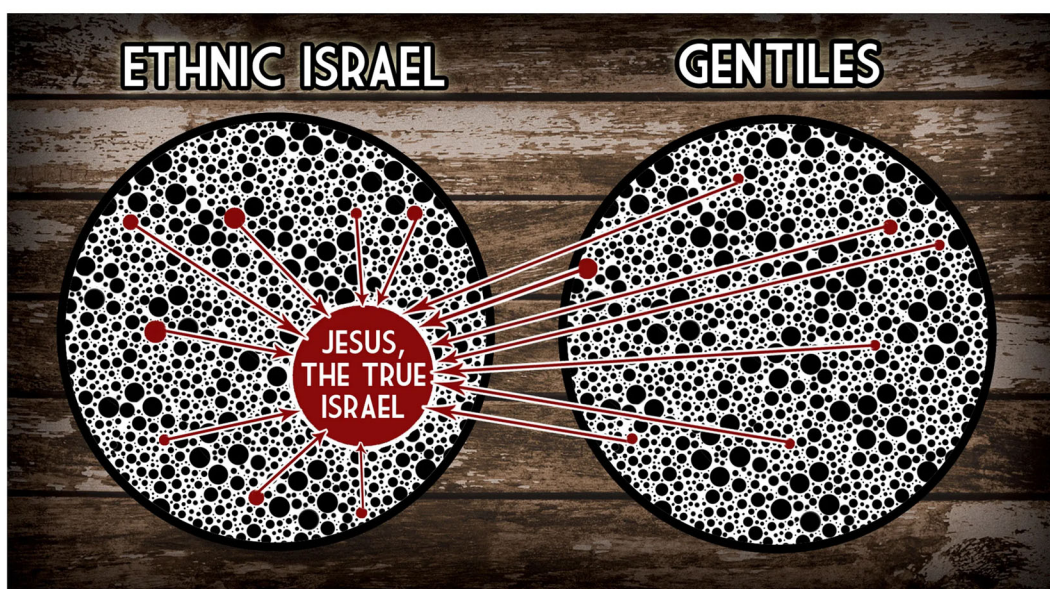
At first reading, we think, “okay, so what? Seems like a straightforward fulfillment.” That is, however, until you read the more full Old Testament prophecy in **Hosea**.

Hosea 11.1

¹ When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

God actually says that this “son/child” is Israel, and *Jesus* is the one who *ultimately* fulfilled this Scripture, not the nation of Israel. Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, He is the True Israel, and anyone who believes in Him (whether Jew or Gentile) are grafted into *Him* by God’s grace, through faith.

Notice below, all the dots in both Ethnic Israel and Gentiles were black due to sin. But there was *one* red dot, the Jewish baby born in Bethlehem who would be the only true Jew on His own merit. And then some of those black dots from both Jew and Gentile are saved by grace and grafted into Jesus, the True Israel, the olive tree from whom they were not previously a part of. And now, that remnant has been saved as they were grafted into the True Israel, Jesus.



So, will Israel get the land promised to them in the Old Testament? Yes! But not just a sliver of land in the Middle East given to ethnic Israel. This is much bigger than that! Rather, because Christ is the True Israel, and *He* has fulfilled the Abrahamic Covenant, *He will inherit the nations* because of He has fulfilled the covenant!

Psalms 2.8

⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

Even further, because we are grafted into Him, *we too* then receive the inheritance that He has received.

Psalms 111.5, 6

⁵ He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

⁶ He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations.

Even as He said, “the meek shall inherit the earth,” He reveals that not *only* will His people receive the land promised, but they will inherit the *entire earth*.

ONE BODY OF CHRIST

So, we can see that the great eternal benefits don't end with our reconciliation and union with Christ, but that as we have been seeing, we are *also* reconciled to one another and brought into a singular commonwealth, a singular nation made up of those who have been saved by grace, through faith, regardless of ethnicity. Salvation not only breaks down the wall between mankind and Christ, but also breaks down the barrier between Jew and Gentile.⁷⁶⁷ We are not simply saved as individuals, but we are saved as a *people*. We are not saved into a life of monk-like loneliness, but we are saved into community, into family, a new society of redeemed people that will enjoy their God and each other for the rest of eternity.

**You *cannot* separate your relationship with Christ
from your relationship with His body!
To be committed to Christ
is to be committed to the church that He died for!**

That said, let's first look at what this means for us to be the body of Christ.

As we back up and look at the big picture, we remember that the entire Bible is built on the great covenant promise that God desires to be our God and wants us to be His people. As we have looked at all the great benefits of the cross and what Jesus has accomplished on our behalf, it is important for us to not minimize these benefits to be too individual or self-addressed. But rather, it is of utmost importance that goal was for us to be His "people," not "individuals."

Quite commonly in the church, we see a huge priority put on our private relationship with God. I think that this is quite common in America, as we have become very accustomed to argue and vote for or against things like invasions of privacy, rights, freedom of speech, hate speech, separation of church and state, political correctness, etc. That mentality has then overflowed into our faith. We loosely throw terms around, such as "*my* relationship with Jesus" and "*personal* Savior," as well as citing phrases such as "don't judge me" or "well we'll have to just agree to disagree" when we want to highlight some sort of autonomous independence.

The cross goes to war against racism, prejudice, "personal rights," and isolation.

We are in this together. We are one family, one people, one body. Now don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that Jesus doesn't love us and care for us individually or that we don't or shouldn't have an intimate, one on one relationship with Jesus Christ, but what I do see all too often is an attitude of "hey, I've got my beliefs and you've got yours and mine are none of your business and you can't judge me for it." The fact of the matter is that our unity with Christ comes as a package deal. It's like a "buy one get one free" bargain. You sign up for Jesus and you get His body for free.

The Great Commission is not multiple choice.

The bottom line is that we are called to love God *and* each other. Furthermore, the very fact that Jesus calls us His body should show us, as I stated above, that our relationship with Christ is inseparable from our relationship from His body.⁷⁶⁸ You can't say, "Hey Jesus, I love You, but I can't stand Your body. Can we just Skype so I can just look at your face?" If you were to say to me, "Hey Jobey, you're great, but I can't stand your wife. Do you want to hang out?" I'll be honest, we aren't going to be friends. And it'd be ridiculous to think otherwise. My wife and I are one. It's an all or nothing deal.

⁷⁶⁷ Romans 1.16, 3.29, 9.24, 10.12 // Ephesians 2.14-22

⁷⁶⁸ Ephesians 3.6 //

The GLORIOUS Purpose of the Body

So what is the purpose of the body? What is God's desire for us? Let's look at what Paul says in speaking of this great and glorious truth:

Ephesians 1.15-23

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 4.4-16

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”

⁹ (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Note three particular things from these verses:⁷⁶⁹

1. The church is His body.

Apart from what we have already seen, that it breaks down the walls between Jew and Gentile, but it also means that we make up the varying body “parts,” or “members” of His body.

2. He is going to fill all things.

In **Ephesians 1.22, 23**, God the Father has put *everything* under the Lordship of Christ. We saw hints of this in the chapter on the Trinity, how God the Father loves to share His glory with God the Son, and here we see, upon the procuring of the Covenant of Redemption due to Christ's victory on the cross, the Father rewards Christ in part by putting all things in His care. The Father does this, as well, because Christ has earned, through His works, obedience, life of perfection, and death on the cross, the right place as being Lord over all. Through the work of His atonement, He has conquered death, and the Father raised Him up from the dead because His wrath was satisfied by Christ. Because the Father was pleased, He gave Christ all things as His inheritance.

What this means is that everything, right now, is under Christ's authority and Lordship, and His intent is to fill every part of life and existence with His glory, and He will do exactly that. Of course, as we saw in the chapter on sin, death, and evil, He has not put all of these in their eventual, eternal home, which is the Lake of Fire, but

⁷⁶⁹ John Piper notes these three items in an article and sermon found here: <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/his-body-the-fullness-of-him-who-fills-all-in-all>

in His patience, longsuffering, and desire for His own grace to be put on display and glorified, He appoints and allows these things to happen for a greater cause only known to Him.

Here is the glorious truth though: Jesus is currently at the right hand of His Father, ruling and reigning with *all things* under His Lordship. He is “head over all things,” and in His headship, **Ephesians** here says that He will “fill all things” [4.10] and who “fills all in all” [1.23].

Christ will fill all things with His glory, and His glory will be made known.

This present darkness will not last. **James 4.14** calls our life here just a “mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.” This is why Paul says in **Romans 8.18** that the “sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that *is to be revealed* to us.” His glory will consume all things. He will fill all in all. He already has the victory, and it is only a matter of His perfect time when He consumes all things. His timing is perfect. His ways are true. Make no mistake about it, God will “work all things for the good for those who love God,” and not only that, He will work all things for the good for the purpose of exalting His glorious grace.⁷⁷⁰

3. Christ’s body is the fullness by which He fills all things.

But *now*, to take things even *further* and into a place of even greater glorious truth, we have seen very clearly that we have been *unified* with Christ as *His actual body*. We are *intimately* one with Him, as a husband and bride, and we are eternally one with Him. So what does this mean when it comes to our mission and purpose?

Christ’s body is the fullness by which He fills all things.

But what, exactly, does this mean? Upon reading **Ephesians 1.22, 23** again, it says, “he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” Here it says that *we*, His body, are *the fullness of Him!*

God the Father very well could have given all authority and Lordship to Christ and said “here, Son, fill all the world with Your glory on Your own.” And Jesus could have. But *no!* The Father gave Jesus all authority, then *gave Jesus to us as our head*, so that *we* would be the fullness of Christ who fills all in all! Christ now, completely unified with His body, will *fill the world with His glory* by using *us*, *His body!*

This is one heck of a truth! Understanding the very design and purpose of the church in this light does a few important things for us.

- We recognize that this isn’t about us, it is about Christ and His glory being known.
- We realize that our faith isn’t to be privatized, secret, and isolated, but communal and global.
- We begin to understand the reality of the power, authority, freedom, and purpose that God has given each of us as the corporate church.
- We see God’s selfless desire to share in the glorious existence and working of His Kingdom.
- We see that God’s plan is a lot crazier and more awesome than we first thought. He doesn’t care just about salvation, but *how* salvation happens is just as glorious and awe-inspiring!
- We begin to reconcile some of our questions on how the doctrine of election fleshes out. When we wonder “well if God already chose everyone, then why evangelize?” We see here that it is because He *chose* to *share* this wonderful act of filling the world with His glory *with us*. Though it is He that does all things and has all authority, He decides to give us the awesome privilege of being united in Christ and partnering with the redemption of those He chose and the total filling of all things with Himself. Wow, praise the Lord!
- It inspires us and motivates us to “work out our salvation” because we see that there is a glorious task that God has “prepared for us beforehand.” This does war against apathetic, lazy Christianity that, as Bonhoeffer said, makes room for “the Fatherhood of God but omits Christ as the living Son... There is trust in God, but no following of Christ.”⁷⁷¹

⁷⁷⁰ Ephesians 1.6

⁷⁷¹ *The Cost of Discipleship*, pg. 63-66

What is a Church?

So, if we are His body, and He wants to use us to fill the world with His glory, let's define what a church is and how God has designed it to operate. Let's now look specifically at some of the practical implications of the church.

When you see the word *church* in the New Testament the actual Greek word that is used is *ekklesia*.⁷⁷² This is where we get the term "ecclesiology," which means the "study of the church." It is a word used when we are talking about certain doctrines and teachings of biblical church form, function, and purpose.

Ekklesia: Literally "'a calling out,' an assembly of the people convened at the public place of council for the purpose of deliberating."⁷⁷²

The word *ekklesia* in its basic translation actually means "assembly," not "church;" church is an English word that comes from the Greek word *kyridakon*, a word that didn't come about until the 16th Century and therefore is not in the Bible. That said, an *ekklesia* was not just a simple assembly. As a matter of fact, there are quite a few words the Greek language has for the word "assembly." Here are a few of the other different words and specific definitions used for "assembly" in the New Testament:

Ekklesia: A public assembly of people with a cause, an "assembly of citizens summoned by the crier."⁷⁷³

Koinonia: Fellowship, partnership, communion.⁷⁷⁴ Speaking of fellowship with each other and with the Lord.

Ochlos: Company, multitude, number of people.⁷⁷⁵

Episunagoge: A complete collection; especially a Christian meeting (for worship)⁷⁷⁶

Pleethos: Gathering, group, assembly, multitude. Used even to describe a multitude of disciples.⁷⁷⁷

Suneimi: Gather together, assemble.⁷⁷⁸

Paneegurei: General assembly, mass meeting.⁷⁷⁹

Sunagoge: Assembly, specifically Jewish (synagogue).⁷⁸⁰

Kyridakon: Church, specifically Christian, but never occurring until the 1500's.⁷⁸¹

But *ekklesia* pre-dates Christianity as a political term, going back to at least the 5th Century BC, when it was used to call out an army to action.⁷⁸² It is not just a religious term, but was more commonly used for political groups and activists in that day, particularly ones with influence and popularity, and often times to the disdain of the local government or society. One such event was in the instance in **Acts 19.32** when the pagan rioters gathered together to protest Paul's preaching in Ephesus. These definitely weren't church members as we would see them, nor were they a "fellowship" of guys just hanging out. No, they had a real purpose, and they were summoned together for a purpose.

In this day, Jesus was seen by believers (and His opponents) as the King and so the Bible authors used the term *ekklesia* for a good reason. In Scott and Liddell's *Greek-English Lexicon* it states that "in classical Greek 'ekklesia' meant 'an assembly of citizens summoned by the crier, the legislative assembly.'"

Why is this important? How you view "church" will dictate how you approach your walk as a disciple while on this earth. To take the specific use of the word *ekklesia* even further, we'll look further at the three primary uses within the context of our faith, as we see the Word use the word "church" in a few different ways.

⁷⁷² Thayer's Greek Lexicon

⁷⁷³ Matthew 16.18 // Acts 5.11, 8.1, 3 // Romans 16.1, 5 // 1 Corinthians 1.2, 4.17, 11.18, 12.28, 14.19, 23, 28, 15.9, 16.19 // Ephesians 1.22, 3.10, 21, 5.23-32 // Colossians 1.18, 24, 4.15, 16 // 1 Thessalonians 1.1 // 1 Timothy 3.5, 15, 5.16, 17 // Philemon 2 // Hebrews 12.23 // James 5.14 // Revelation 2.1, 8, 12, 18, 3.1, 7, 14

⁷⁷⁴ Philippians 2.1, 3.10 // 2 Corinthians 8.4, 9.13, 13.13 // Hebrews 13.16 // Philemon 6 // 2 Corinthians 8.4 // Ephesians 3.9 // Acts 2.42 // 1 John 1.3, 6

⁷⁷⁵ Matthew 9.23, 25, 15.10 // Mark 2.4, 3.9 // Luke 5.1, 19, 29, 7.9 // John 5.13, 6.22-24 // Acts 14.14, 17.8, 21.34 // Acts 24.12 // Revelation 7.6, 17.15, 19.1, 6

⁷⁷⁶ This particular definition is from Strong's Concordance. 2 Thessalonians 2.1 // Hebrews 10.25

⁷⁷⁷ Mark 3.7, 8 // Luke 1.10, 2.13, 19.37 // Acts 2.6, 5.14, 16, 6.2, 14.1, 15.12, 30

⁷⁷⁸ Luke 8.4

⁷⁷⁹ Hebrews 12.23

⁷⁸⁰ Luke 12.11 // Acts 9.2, 13.43, 26.11 // James 2.2 // Matthew 10.17, 23.34 // Mark 13.9 // Luke 12.11 // John 6.59, 18.20

⁷⁸¹ Kyridakon is a word that means "belonging to the Lord," and it has been in use since around 300 AD, when it was largely used to describe the actual place of meeting, specifically as a phrase "kyriakondoma," or "the Lord's house." It wasn't until the 1500's, however, until the word was Anglicized to "church" and officially used in place of the Greek word "ekklesia," which should be translated more appropriately as "assembly."

⁷⁸² The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology by Colin Brown, pg. 291.

1. **Universal/Invisible/Spiritual:** this is “the church” universal of past, present, and future; the eternal body of Christ. This is spoken of this way specifically about 11 times.⁷⁸³
2. **Local/Visible/Physical:** these are individual “churches” in the Word and are limited to particular participants within a locale, be it individual homes, cities, or regions, such as:⁷⁸⁴
 - **Regional churches:** church in Judea, Macedonia, **Acts 9.31, 2 Corinthians 8.1**
 - **City churches:** church at Jerusalem, Antioch, Thessalonica, **Acts 11.22, 13.1, and Thessalonians 1.1**
 - **Specific location churches:** church in Priscilla and Aquila’s house, **Romans 16.5, 1 Corinthians 16.19**
3. **Widespread/Visible/Physical:** this is the physical church or assembly of believers spoken of globally, but currently living (in other words, not speaking about an eternal past, present, and future, but present day yet widespread church) and not limited to a particular locale.⁷⁸⁵

When *ekklesia* is rarely used explicitly in a universal, spiritual way, it is the spiritual and eternal *assembly* of all believers of all time and is often accompanied by the phrase “His body,” referring to the “the body of Christ,” or as “My church,”⁷⁸⁶ which is indeed the term used for the universal, invisible church.⁷⁸⁷ That said, some theologians even say that it is never truly used in the universal, spiritual sense, but when it is used universally, it is still speaking of a *widespread physical* collection of all the *assemblies*, whether past or present, and the term “body” or “bride” is used when speaking of the spiritual sense.⁷⁸⁸ What this shows us is that the word *church* can be used on a national scale (e.g., the American church), a regional scale (e.g., the church in North County), or specific locations (e.g., Life Mission Church Church).

Either way, in most cases (*at least* 103 out of 114 times, which is a conservative number), it is used to denote a physical, living assembly of people. But again, these Christian *ekklesias* were not simply “fellowships” where believers just hang out together in homes and eat bread, drink wine, and encourage and minister to one another. That, I would put forth, is the Greek word, *koinonia*♣ (among others⁷⁸⁹), which indeed is one of the very important *functions or activities* and even *marks* of the body of Christ, but it is *not* “church” (*ekklesia*).

What the Church is Not

I’ve heard it said many times (and I have been one of them saying these before understanding the deep and wise purpose and design of the *ekklesia* on earth), that church can be whatever we think church is, and I will hear (and have said) things like this:

- “Church to me is hanging out with friends, drinking a beer, playing some cards, and just being brothers.”
- “Church to me is having coffee at Starbucks with my girlfriends and praying for each other.”
- “You don’t have to go to church to be the church.”
- “I don’t need to go to church to be a Christian, I just need me and Jesus and my Bible.”

Now, to be sure, I’m all about hanging out with my buddies and having a great time of relationship and conversation and encouragement and laughter. I love late night conversations with a brother talking about life, parenting, ministry, doctrine, challenges, choices, baseball, and basically some good ol’ fashioned “iron sharpening iron.”⁷⁹⁰ I also know my wife loves hanging out with her girlfriends drinking coffee or tea and doing the same things. I also understand and agree with the love for loving deep and fruitful relationship, but I disagree with the theology that starts with “Church to me is...”

In addition to that, the phrase “You don’t have to go to church to be the church” is also rooted in a poor misunderstanding of God’s purpose and plan for His body. The word *ekklesia* means “assembly.” It is not a personal, autonomous identity, but it is a corporate identity.

⁷⁸³ Matthew 16.18 // Ephesians 1.22, 3.10, 5.23-33 // Colossians 1.18, 24 // Hebrews 12.23

⁷⁸⁴ Acts 5.11, 8.1, 11.22, 26, 15.3, 4, 22, 41 // 1 Thessalonians 1.1 // 1 Corinthians 1.2, 14.4, 5, 12, 19, 23, 28, 33-35, 2 Corinthians 1.1, 8.1, 18, 23, 24, Romans 16.1, 4, 5, 16, 23 // Colossians 4.15, 16 // Philippians 4.15 // 3 John 6, 9, 10 // Revelation 2.1, 8, 12, 18, 3.1, 7, 14

⁷⁸⁵ Galatians 1.3 // 1 Corinthians 10.32, 11.22, 12.28 // Ephesians 3.21 // Philippians 3.6 // 1 Timothy 3.15

⁷⁸⁶ Matthew 16.18

⁷⁸⁷ Ephesians 3.10, 5.23-32 // Colossians 1.24

⁷⁸⁸ This is a bit of a stretch, but it should at least cause us to see the distinct contexts in which the word “ekklesia” is used.

⁷⁸⁹ As mentioned before, the words *Episunagoge* means a “complete collection; especially a Christian meeting (for worship),” and *Plethos* was used to describe the gathering together of the disciples.

⁷⁹⁰ Proverbs 27.17

**You are not the church. You are a part of the church.
An assembly of one is no assembly at all.**



Not the church. Not even “a” church.

You do in fact have to assemble *somewhere* with *someone* to be an assembly of any sort (whether or not that constitutes being a church/*ekklesia* is another matter we will look at below). Consider this quote by the late Dr. Ray Ortland, Sr.:

“The Christian who is not committed to a group of other believers for praying, sharing, and serving, so that he is known, as he knows others, is not an obedient Christian. He is not in the will of God. However vocal he may be in his theology, he is not obeying the Lord.”

**You don’t have to “go to church” to *be* a Christian,
but you do have to “go to church (the assembly)” to be an *obedient* one.**

To further clarify, and I don’t mean to split hairs, but this is a topic that has come under such opposition in recent years I feel like it is at least important to point to specifics, again not to make a mountain out of a molehill, but from my perspective, the mountain has already been made, and the hairs have already been split. When it comes to good godly fellowship between friends, whether it’s over a cigar or a latte, at a Starbucks or in a Man Room, or in a home or in a building or on a beach, this still does not necessarily constitute “church” as we see implicitly defined in the Word, but rather it is exactly what I just called it: “good godly fellowship.”

Fellowship is one of the many beautiful interactions of the church. This “communion” (*koinonia* in the Greek), is shown in the Word as being very intimate, personal, communal, passionate, dedicated, loyal, loving, merciful, gracious, and social. We have *koinonia* with God and with other like-minded believers.

But *ekklesia* is different. Not in its attributes so much, as it also should have all the godly traits I just listed for fellowship, but it is different in its function and purpose. Again, to revisit the Greek definitions and make a hybrid between Thayer’s and Scott and Liddell’s lexicons, *ekklesia* is an “assembly of people called out into the public, summoned by the crier for the purpose of deliberation.”

Now, again, I know I could be accused of splitting hairs here, but me hanging out with a close friend for the purpose of conversation and fellowship doesn’t seem to fall under that definition of *ekklesia*. And this is not just by Greek definition, but by biblical context. As we will see, the *ekklesia* was assumed by both biblical authors and hearers to be a public entity; namely, it is the publicly known assembly that would be God’s witness to a world of non-believers, filling the world with the glory of God. This would be an assembly that is active, public, purposeful, and called out together (not alone in your bed with your Bible attending Pillow Presbyterian or Bedside Baptist).⁷⁹¹ They were accompanied by either an action or a reputation of action, or for the purpose of deliberating action (such as again to use a non-Christian usage in **Acts 19.32**). These *ekklesias* were active in their faith and community.

This tells us that though you don’t have to physically assemble with people to be a part of the body or bride of Christ (universal, invisible, and spiritual), but you *do*, in fact, have to assemble with the *active and physical* body with purpose and action in order to be a part of the physical *ekklesia* on earth and obedient to God’s Word and design.

ONE BUT MANY

In addition to God’s people being “the” church, we also see that there is such thing as “a” church, meaning that though there is indeed one true, universal, invisible, spiritual body of Christ, there is also many individual, local churches. We see reference in many Scriptures mentioning individual local, physical churches (35 instances in the NIV where the actual

⁷⁹¹ Or Chamomile Community Chapel or Late Night Lutheran or Sleep in Seventh Day Adventist or Cozy Blanket Calvary or Snooze Button Southern Baptist.

plural word “churches” (*ekklesias*) is used⁷⁹²). These can be autonomous or denominational, large or small. Some meet in homes, some meet in large buildings, some meet on the beach or in the back of a pub or in a mud hut. Some are highly evangelistic like an army, some are more like a hospital, and others still are more academic. This is the garden of the Lord, a wide variety of sights, sounds, and aromas, but all indeed one garden, *the church*.

The global church is a diverse church.

Of course, in all this big crazy family we call the church, there is a lot of diversity, difference, disagreement, and division. The unique qualities of each individual believer are further amplified and seen in the fact that there are also unique qualities in each church. Many times, these diverse qualities and differences are healthy, necessary, and quite complimentary. One church that is weak in, say, counseling or high needs benevolence, can lean on and partner with the church across town that has a deep heart, ability, and leadership to take on such consuming ministries.

But of course, there are also always disagreements and divisions. Disagreements aren’t always bad, because there are, indeed, many convictions that we can and do disagree with. As long as we agree to disagree in love on non-essentials, we are okay. Divisions over *non-essentials*, on the other hand, are usually never good.

All this to say that it is true and part of God’s design that we are one, yet we are also many. Having multiple denominations, locations, church names, and methodologies is not necessarily or always bad (though it can be). As a matter of fact, I think it can often times be pretty beautiful even. And furthermore, I think that we quite need it. If we were all simply called “the church,” we would all be lumped in together with any “Christ-based” religion, church, or cult. What difference would my local church be in the eyes of a non-believer compared to a Mormon church or the former David Koresh led Branch Davidian sect if we were all just “the church”? When you visit a Presbyterian or Methodist or Calvary Chapel or Reformed church, you know what they, for the most part, stand for, both doctrinally and within their values.

Of course, the ideal would be that each church would be perfectly balanced in all areas of doctrine, that each would be well balanced as a loving, nurturing hospital, an unashamed, bold, Gospel army, and a truth defending, Berean-like school of humble theologians and Bible students. We would love to see every church agree on every bit of ministry and doctrine. We would love to see that every church see church life the way we see church life. But, so far as you yourself are ever a part of any church body or assembly, and so far that *anyone* be a part of *any* church, that church would then cease to be perfect. The church is the assembly of imperfect (but being perfected!) people. It has always been, and it always will be, until that great Day when we are finally glorified. So, in the meantime, let’s get used to it and continue to grow in grace, wisdom, and the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Marks of a Church

With all that has been said already, what are the ‘marks’ of a ‘true church’? Though we could indeed have a very long list of attributes (mercy, grace, peace, etc.), we want to look at what the Word conveys as being the marks of a healthy church. The Christians of the Reformation focused on three aspects: true preaching of the Word, right administration of the ordinances, and church discipline.⁷⁹³

John Frame I believe rightly broadens these marks into *worship* (which includes the sacraments), *love* (based on **John 13.35**, and which also includes discipline, which is an act of love when correct), and *the Great Commission* (which includes the preaching of the Word).⁷⁹⁴ I have to say I absolutely agree with this, but I would like to also add my two cents to further build on his triad.

If Frame were to neatly “motto-ize” his triad for the marks of a true church, it could possibly be “Worship. Love. Go.” As a pastor, when we first planted our church in 2013, we built the foundation of our church on these same marks, but we ascertained them from the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, which we communicate succinctly by saying we are “Saved by the Gospel, Equipped by the Gospel, Sent by the Gospel,” or even more succinctly, “Saved to be Sent.”

⁷⁹² Revelation 2.7, 11, 17, 23, 29, and 22.16 // Galatians 1.2 // Acts 15.41 // Romans 16.16 // 2 Corinthians 8.16-24. Also, in addition to those 35, the singular “church” is, in fact, most times used in context with an individual, local, non-universal/spiritual church, such as “the church at Jerusalem.”

⁷⁹³ See here for a great article: <http://www.apuritansmind.com/Pastoral/McMahonThreeMarksTrueChurch.htm>

⁷⁹⁴ *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, pg. 241

Other churches may use similar phrases, like “Believe. Belong. Become.” or something similar. Regardless of what words you pick, their biblical foundation is most important.

So let’s now take a further look at these two “Greats” in the Bible as marks, as well as other verses we see.

1). First, we look again and see what Jesus commands us to do as His body:

The GREAT COMMANDMENT

Matthew 22.37-40

³⁷ Jesus said, '**Love the Lord** your God with all your heart, soul, and mind *[Saved by the Gospel]*.³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: **Love your neighbor** as yourself *[Equipped by the Gospel]*.⁴⁰ All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.'"

The GREAT COMMISSION

Matthew 28.19-20

¹⁹ Jesus said, 'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you *[Sent by the Gospel]*.'

2). Next, we see in Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before He died (literally His dying wish on His deathbed), He prayed this prayer:

John 17.23

²³ “I in them and You in Me *[Saved by the Gospel]*. That they [the church] may be brought to complete unity *[Equipped by the Gospel]* so that the world may know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me *Sent by the Gospel]*.”

Jesus’ heart for us, the *ekklesia* on earth, is to be unified with each other, so that the world would know that the Father sent Jesus to love us and die for us! When we are unified with each other, the world around us takes notices and wants to know who our God is, resulting in salvation for the lost.

3). Lastly, we see what happens when the church actually puts into practice these commands and prayer of Jesus:

Acts 2.42-47

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching *[Saved by the Gospel]* and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts *[Equipped by the Gospel]*,⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. *[Sent by the Gospel, which produced salvation, starting new believers on their road of being Saved, Equipped, and Sent]*

Additionally, from our standpoint, both biblically seen in these last two portions of Scripture as well as practically in our day to day goings on as a church, we see that the last mark, the evangelism/sent/Great Commission element, is the *result* of the previous two being carried out. We see that when Christ prayed that we would be one in Him as well as unified with each other, *then* the world would know that the Father sent the Son. We also see in **Acts 2** that the favor of all people and the salvation added was a direct result of them being committed to the apostles’ teaching and committed to unity of fellowship and communion with one another.

The Father sent Jesus to love us and die for us! When we are unified with each other, the world around us takes notices and wants to know who our God is, resulting in salvation for the lost. No one ever wants to be part of a divisive, gossiping, loveless church. This is why, as Frame pointed out, that one of the main themes (and I would add that it is *the* overarching theme of all three marks that I pointed out) is love, based on **John 13.35**.

A great commitment to the Great Commandment will drive the Great Commission.

I liken these three marks to that of a campfire. When the firewood is stacked together and lit on fire, they create a unified and powerful heat where those on the outside of the campfire are drawn to it to keep warm. Of course, as cliché

as it may be, the individual pieces of wood are the members of the church in unity, and the fire is the Lord. When we are united with Christ and united with each other, the world around us becomes interested *and* blessed.

However, if an ember flies out of the flame and lands apart from the fire, it will indeed stay warm for a short time, but it becomes ineffective. Sure, it may give off enough heat for a field mouse to warm its buns, but most definitely not for any one person. On top of that, it eventually goes out, as the cold air eventually overpowers it.

**It is in the complete unity with one another where we bring
warmth and light to a cold, dark world.**

☪ Church Life is a Complete Life ☪

We need God, of course, but we need each other as well. We need each other because the world needs us. The world needs us because the world needs Christ, and Christ, as we have seen, was given to us as our head, and He uses us, His body, to fill the world with His glory. Lone Ranger Christianity is simply unbiblical and it is unloving, towards not only to both God and His church, but also to the lost.

There is something about being obedient and committed to God's way of doing things. As a believer, you very much will encounter God on your own: in your studies, prayer time, worship, and personal evangelism. But there is something about being actively a part of the church that causes your walk with the Lord to just "click." It's like you finally see that something was missing, and you aren't quite sure how (or why!) you ever thought that "church" life was optional.

**God has purposely designed our lives to be most effective
in the context of relationships and family.**

I always remember the times when I was single and before I met my wife, Katie. I was leading worship, involved in ministry, on staff at a church I loved to be a part of, working in youth ministry, going on snowboarding trips, going to Bible College, living on my own, and all in all having a good time. Now, after almost 25 years of marriage, it is impossible for me to imagine not having her with me as my wife. To borrow from a movie with the absolute most cliché line ever in the history of film making, I could honestly say to her, "you complete me." And to be honest, I could only imagine that I would be incredibly incomplete without her.



As a couple, we could absolutely say the same about our kids. Life was great, awesome, exciting, fun, and all that good stuff before we had kids. And yet when the day came when we welcomed our firstborn, Micah Slane, into the world, we would never change it for anything. Now, with our second, Liam Slane,⁷⁹⁵ we look back and can't imagine our marriage without our two boys. Life went from great, awesome, exciting, and fun to *incredibly* great, awesome, exciting, and fun. All this to say is that God has designed us to be part of a church. It isn't enough to simply be automatically adopted into the body of Christ, but there must be the intimate and active interaction within the body, the actual *ekklesia* (assembly) of the body for each of us to fully and truly enjoy all the great benefits of being adopted as sons and daughters into the Kingdom of God. This goes back to the very observation that God made in the Garden, that "it is not good for man to be alone."⁷⁹⁶ Of course this is specifically speaking of marriage, but there is a very obvious underlying truth here, that God wants us in community, and that to be alone is "not good." The beauty here, too, is that for those that aren't married, were married, don't have kids, or their kids are all grown up and out of the house, there is *always* community and family, because you are *really* and *actually* a part of the family of God!

Now what this doesn't mean is that if you are actively involved in your local church body that all of your problems will go away. When I say life "clicks," I don't mean you go around with the spiritual Midas touch. My personal problems didn't

⁷⁹⁵ In case you are wondering, yes, my boys have the same middle name. Slane is the anglicized word for the Irish word for "salvation." The Hill of Slane in Ireland is where St. Patrick first boldly introduced Christianity to Ireland (which is why the song "Be Thou My Vision" was originally titled "Slane."). So, Micah's name means "Who is like the Lord of Salvation?" (Micah 7.18), and Liam's name means "Helmet of Salvation" (Ephesians 6.17). The phrase "Slainte" is also the Irish farewell blessing or salute (like "cheers"), meaning "to your salvation."

⁷⁹⁶ Genesis 2.18

go away when I got married, nor did they go away when I had kids. But my life “clicks” with them in it. Furthermore, it’s my wife (and my kids!) that help me work out the many problems and issues that I *do* have; the problems that would go unanswered and unchallenged if I didn’t have them with me.

He chose as His plan to make us a people, not persons; a body, not body parts; a bride, not many brides.

This is part of what makes God’s plan of *ekklesia* so incredible. Granted, His people are made up of a bunch of individual people; people who have uniquely designed personalities and strengths and weaknesses, and people that He individually loves and desires to have an intimate interaction with. The body as well is also made up of individual body parts or “members.” We also must recognize that we as a whole make up the single bride of Christ, even though we are all individually His beloved. But the main overall view God portrays us as is a collective people. A single entity, united with each other and with Christ. And it is with this in mind that He has designed our life on this side of eternity to be most effective.

Now that we have seen a bit of why God has designed life in the body to be this way, let’s see how we can aim to fulfill this great and awesome plan to the glory of God as His church.

Church Structure

It is important to note that there is not enough explicitly and specifically in the Word to give “the church” any official, dogmatic ecclesiology when it comes to every detail of structure and practical function. That said, there is still in fact plenty in the Word to give us, His church on earth, important foundational structures and order that we can build upon per our specific needs within the context of our ministry. In other words, we will vary on the how-tos of our ecclesiology, but close study should give us a very solid, biblical (even if varying) foundation on what a healthy functioning church looks like.



With no left hand, the right is limited to 6 notes. With no right hand, the left, though leading the melody, is limited to sloppiness.

In the New Testament, there are many roles and functions of believers within the *ekklesia*, but there are most specifically three main groupings of people delineated when pertaining to role and structure (however this is *not* pertaining to gifting, “social class,” ministry, or function) of the *ekklesia*.⁷⁹⁷ Though all three of these groups are equally part of the body of Christ, they have different roles and responsibilities within the local *ekklesia*.

This is what is known as a *complementarian*♣ view of Christian life. This complementarian view is one that acknowledges that though we are all 100% equal in our heavenly citizenship, salvation, priesthood, eternal stance, human rights, imagery of God, etc., we have been given different roles and functions to *complement* each other. This view is seen in the biblical structure of family,

marriages, the physical/local church, and most especially, the Trinity. It is akin to a left and right hand. Both equal in make-up and both work together in unison, yet one is given a role to be the “lead” hand in a task.

This is another doctrinal issue that has been hotly debated in the last few years. Though I flatly disagree with the *hierarchal system*,♣ many *egalitarians*♣ would lump the complimentary approach wrongfully in with hierarchal. Admittedly, many churches, marriages, governments, and families have abused their roles, often imposing a dictatorship hierarchy on their “subjects.” Due to this, many will run the other way at any mention of the word “structure,” “organization,” “leadership,” or especially “submission.”

But this is a terrible mistake. We cannot ignore or throw out biblical precedents simply because they were abused by human egos and actions. We must look objectively at the Scriptures at hand and consider the ‘what’ and the ‘why.’ For me, the most important aspect of this discrepancy comes from our understanding of the Trinity.

⁷⁹⁷ Philippians 1.1 // Acts 6.1-6

THE TRINITY AS A MODEL

In regards to the Trinity, as we covered in **Chapter II**, we see that all things proceed “From the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit.” We know that the Father sent the Son, the Son submitted to the Father, and the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son. Now, this in no way degrades neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit. All three Persons remain completely equal in substance and essence, yet they have different roles.

Does submission degrade the one who is submitting? Apparently, the Son didn’t think so, and furthermore, the Holy Spirit didn’t think so. As a matter of fact, the Holy Spirit’s job description is “the Helper.” Yes, He is the Server. And who is it He serves? Little ol’ sinful us. Talk about the short end of the stick! Do you think you deserve better than your dead-beat husband? Do you think your parents need to be more understanding of your late-night curfew needs? The Holy Spirit was given the job to dwell in and partner with us. Now *that* is a tough, arduous job. But did He consider it degrading to submit Himself to the Father and the Son to do this job? *Not at all!* Did the Son consider it degrading to submit Himself to the will of His Father? *Not at all!* So why should we be so put off by the idea that we are to submit to each other?

**When it comes to submission, the problem isn’t because submission is bad,
the problem is that our hearts are bad.**

To fight against submission is an egotistical, self-centered fight. To see it as degrading is a problem within us; we feel that it makes us “less than” somehow. But it is quite the opposite, as a matter of fact. In **Ephesians 5.21** it says to “submit to one another.” The verb “submit” here is the Greek word *hupotassómenoi*, and is a present participle, which means it depends on the imperative verb found in **verse 18**, which is “be filled,” pertaining to being “filled with the Holy Spirit.” In Greek, present participles can be used as imperatives depending on the structure. In this case, “submit” serves as an imperative for **verse 22**, and therefore mutual submission in **verse 21** *encompasses* the context of **verses 5.23-6.9**.

MUTUAL SUBMISSION

In other words, “submitting one to another” is both the evidence of being filled by the Spirit *and* the source command for the specific submissive instructions for wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves, and masters, as if to say “submit to one other, for instance in these specific ways...”

This shows us as well that on top of all of this, the one being submitted to, in their own way, must also submit to the other. In fact, when **Ephesians 5.21** speaks of “submitting one to another,” it is the introduction sentence to the whole following section. Paul saw a wife submitting to her husband and her husband laying his life down as “mutual submission.” Mutual submission does not necessarily mean *exact reciprocation*. It means that we submit to each other mutually, *but in God’s design*, we may submit in different ways, depending on our role and responsibility.

Mutual submission does *not* mean exact reciprocation. As a parent “mutually submits” to their child, they do indeed serve, but they aren’t to be led by their kids’ orders; the kids are to obey their parents’ orders.

For instance, we see that church members are to submit to their spiritual authorities.

1 Corinthians 16.15-18

¹⁵ Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints— ¹⁶ be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer. ¹⁷ I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence, ¹⁸ for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such men.

Hebrews 13.17

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

The **Hebrews** verse is particularly interesting, because it shows that the submission is actually for the *benefit* of the one who is submitting! This may seem odd at first, but we will soon see how this works.

Likewise, church leaders are to be submitted to the church members, however it may look differently considering their role and responsibility. To speak for myself, aside from God Himself and my family, I live for the purpose of laying my life down for God's people, specifically the people within our church. My hope and aim is to "spend and be spent,"⁷⁹⁸ and to share not only the Gospel, but my whole self.⁷⁹⁹ I absolutely love serving the people in my church. It is the greatest blessing to be able to submit myself to their service. Serving and submitting myself to the folks in my church is one of the most humbling things that I have ever experienced.

Now, part of my service and submission to them is through godly leadership. I submit to them through teaching and instruction, I submit to them by leading worship, and I also submit myself to them by humbly administering church discipline when the time is needed. Godly, sacrificial leadership and humble, approachable governing and shepherding is how anyone in authority truly is mutually submitted to others. I know that I am no better than anyone in my church. I don't have any special access to God, as we are all priests. Yet I also humbly am aware that I have a specific role and responsibility to fulfill amidst my submission to my church family.

The same goes for me as a husband and father. My wife, Katie, and I are one. She is my partner, my best friend, my equal. I respect and desire her opinion, insight, and wisdom. I don't rule over her, but I do lead her. She willingly, joyfully, and lovingly submits to me. She trusts me and follows my lead. I don't command or berate or degrade her. I don't marginalize her. And though she is specifically called to submit to me as her husband, I too, under the umbrella of **Ephesians 5.21**, am to submit to her, although in a *different way* spelled out in Scripture. In submitting to her, I am to live a godly life, give myself to the Word, wash her in it, minister to her, protect her, and, as the Word says most frighteningly, lay my life down for her.

The same goes with my kids. I see them as equals with me as created by God. As they follow the Lord, they will be my brothers in Christ. But I am still "Dad," not "Dude" (as my father-in-law would say to me). They obey Katie and I, respect us, and are disciplined by us. But in a different way spelled out by Scripture, we also submit ourselves to them. We teach them, love them, protect them, serve them, set aside our schedules and desires for them, discipline them, and yet we don't overwhelm them. We are their helpers. This too, is submission, but in the context of a different, yet not *superior* in the grand scheme of *imago Dei*, kind of a role.

Now, to be sure, *all* of this submission must be done with humility and out of love and respect for the other. No matter if it is the submission of someone in the role of authority or in the role of being subject to, we must submit out of love, care, service, and sacrifice for the other party. In addition to it being evidence that we are filled with the Spirit, it is also the mind of Christ and Christ-like, it is God's design in His wisdom and for His glory, it produces the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, and as clearly stated in **Ephesians 5.21**, we do it out of worshipful reverence for Christ. Otherwise, it truly becomes a hierarchy.

To paraphrase John Stott, he mentions that "Wives submit" and "Husbands love" use two different words, "love" and "submit," to distinguish role, but when you attempt to define the two, they are hard to distinguish. He notes that submission and love are two aspects of the same thing: selfless self-giving, which is a mandate for all Christians.⁸⁰⁰ He asks,

What does it mean to 'submit'? It's to give oneself up to somebody. What does it mean to 'love'? It's to give oneself up to somebody, as Christ 'gave Himself' up for us.

Now, let me use an example of the three basic views. I want to show how the major "institutions" of life look like when we have a particular viewpoint. Now, I am not saying that if you have an egalitarian view of marriage then you also support communism. I am simply showing what it looks like in each category (That said, I would make a case that our view of the Trinity often shapes our view, in some form or fashion, for the following items):

⁷⁹⁸ 2 Corinthians 12.15

⁷⁹⁹ 1 Thessalonians 2.8

⁸⁰⁰ *The Message of Ephesians*

	Egalitarian	Complementarian	Hierarchal
Trinity:	Members of the Trinity are completely equal in attribute and role. There is mutual submission amidst them. The Father submits to the Son in the same way the Son submits to the Father. It infers that God is three distinct personalities, rather than Persons. Sabellianism or Modalism.	Members of the Trinity are equally God in eternal power and attribute, yet subordinate in varying roles. The Father “sent” the Son, the Son “obeys” the Father, and the Spirit “glorifies” the Son. Their power and deity are not compromised.	Members of the Trinity fall under a chain of subordination, creating a virtual inequality in the Godhead. Arianism or Subordinationism.
Marriage:	Man and woman are co-equal, created in God’s image. They are equal in their partnership and neither is to lead another, but rather they are completely one and equal in all ways.	Man and woman are co-equal, created in God’s image. They are one in marriage and are partners, yet have different roles. The man is given the role of respectfully and humbly leading his wife for her benefit and laying his life down for her. The wife lovingly submits herself to her husband’s role as leader.	The woman is to be completely submissive in all obedience to the man and has little to no rights in the home. She is seen as “lesser than.”
Parenting:	Parents and children are equal in God’s creation. Discipline is rarely administered in order to give way for “self-discovery” and “love.” Kids run the house, “kids will be kids.”	Parents and children are equal in God’s creation, yet children are to obey their parents. Parents discipline but also nurture.	Children are strictly ruled and governed, usually by the father. They are viewed as “lesser than” within the home. Extreme.
Government:	Communism, socialism, anarchy. Government serves the people.	Democracy, republic, or some derivative of equal opportunity. Government serves the people and the people contribute to society.	Totalitarianism, Dictatorship, Tyranny. People serve the government.
Ecclesiology:	All believers are equally loved and part of and are one in the body of Christ. We are all to be mutually submitted to each other with Christ as our Head Pastor. There are no spiritual “offices” or authority in the church (because it is not needed), no one has “special access” to God (priesthood of every believer), there are only giftings (i.e. pastor, teacher, etc.). Men and women have equal place in ministry and are encouraged to be equipped in all ministries.	All believers are equally loved and part of and are one in the body of Christ. No one has “special access” to God (priesthood of every believer). Some are given varying roles of leadership who serve the people and are a blessing to them. Men and women have equal place in ministry and are encouraged to be equipped in all ministries and giftings, however are not given to the of the role of elder/pastor in accordance to distinct roles modeled in Creation and the Trinity.	This system has priests who have “special access,” “professional” clergy, and spectator Christianity. The staff performs the ministry, the people submit as underlings. Guilt driven. Men are the only ones to do most roles of ministry. Women are not to hold any form of leadership (diaconship, serving communion, leading worship) other than for children and other women.

Our Roles in God's Design

When it comes to the body of Christ and purpose and role of the church, we see that the church, like family, army, or hospital, also has an element of organization and order to it. God has placed Christ as head of His church and is the Head Shepherd. Underneath and in submission to Him is all of the rest of us, with each of our distinct gifts, backgrounds, testimonies, experiences, talents, and abilities.

Every single person who is a believer is called to be a gift given to the church. When God calls you, He sends you. We are all together to be seeking to glorify God within the church by selflessly seeking how to serve one another and be a reflection of the image of Christ. The roles and gifts vary, and there are *numerous* Scriptures that mention our roles and functions as members of the body of Christ.⁸⁰¹ But in the end, amidst our diversity of role and function, we are all equally children, priests, and sanctified saints in the Kingdom of God.

We've already seen some of the varying gifts that God gives His saints in the previous chapter, now let's look at the way God's wisdom has designed us to function within our family with those varying gifts.

MEMBERS

We'll start first with the function that we all are: members of the church. Sometimes the New Testament authors will use words such as disciples, saints, brothers and sisters, and Christians. All of these are markers showing that the person being spoken of is a part of the family of God, noted by both their commitment to Jesus Christ as well as their commitment to His body.

Here is where it gets interesting. Churches vary on how they view who are members of the local church. Some make no distinction, some have a mental list (usually in smaller churches), and some have either a class or particular requirements, whether official or unofficial. Some folks think that having membership or class is "unbiblical," so we shouldn't do it. Others will say "we are called to be committed and accountable, not just for the sake of the church but for the sake of witness." In other words, they would see membership as one way in which accountability, commitment, community, and discipline is encouraged.

But still, some will maintain that as long as you are a Christian you are a member of the body of Christ, and so when the Bible talks about membership it is only talking about our spiritual membership in Christ's body, not our physical commitment to each other. But I don't think this is so. Does the Bible say that "if you are a Christian you are automatically part of the physical church (assembly), and if you are a part of the church you are automatically a Christian"? No way. The Bible speaks of unbelievers being part of "the church" (when the church is being referred to as a localized physical assembly), just in the same way that the Old Testament's use of "Israel" included both believing and non-believing Jews. So, we see that the Bible is making some type of distinction between the local *ekklesia* (assembly), and the eternal, invisible body of Christ.

Now, am I saying that the early *ekklesias* had membership classes and all that stuff? I really have no idea if they did. But it would be foolish to say, "they absolutely did not have some kind of formal discussion, conversation, or teaching." We simply don't know. There very well could have been *some* type of interaction, interviewing, testing, conversation or questioning to ascertain a person's beliefs before accepting them as a member of the local *ekklesia*, either formal or informal (we do know, for instance, that they practiced baptism and communion, which in themselves are evidences and "tests" of the faith of true believers).

Again, it is imperative that we remember that in this context we are *not* taking about being a member of the universal church (the body of Christ). That is done solely, and perfectly, through the atonement applied to you by the Holy Spirit sealing you. Local membership, however, are those members/disciples/saints of the universal church who have decided, in obedience with the Scriptures, to come alongside a local, physical *ekklesia* to engage in relationship, service to others, active roles in the *ekklesia*, and advancing the Kingdom of God with the local *ekklesia*.

Here's the thing, to be called a "member of the church at Ephesus," this would mean that you would actually have to meet together and be accountable and recognized as part of the local flock. Now some would maintain that if you met someone on a road in the first century, they wouldn't ask "where do you go to church" or "what church are you a part of." They would just simply ask "are you of the Way?" (the early name for the new Christian movement), and that the

⁸⁰¹ Romans 12.4-8 // Ephesians 4.11 // 1 Corinthians 12.27-31

idea of “going to church” or asking “where” they go would be foreign. I think this is a short-sighted view of the Christian life in the first century.

I believe that if you were walking on the road and met someone, you would indeed ask them first if they were “of the Way,” and if they said “yes,” you would almost definitely ask them where they meet for church (because “church,” as we see, means “assembly,” not “body”). To ask, “where do you go to the body?” would in fact be a silly question, and we indeed already asked him if he is *of the Way* (part of the *body*). Now, however, we are asking him *where* or *with whom* he *assembles* to worship, grow, and be accountable. We *could* then therefore ask, “*where* do you *assemble* with the body of Christ?”

Why would we care? Because in the mindset of the first church (as it should be in our mindset), assembly with other believers is a natural and expected part of life in the body of Christ.

He would then answer either “at Jonas’ house” or “with the brothers in the room above the fish market” or “in the temple courts” or “on the north shore of the lake.” This would be our equivalent of “with the folks from Calvary Chapel” or “at First Street Baptist” or something of that sort. Building, house, upper room, natural amphitheater, or wherever, the nature of the location or vehicle for meeting was beside the point. The point was “where” and “with whom” for clarity, identity, and personal interest.

So, the heart of the question would be asking of *whom* you have fellowship with, meet together with, are accountable to, and whose teaching you are committed to (as we see, early heresies were already popping up in the first century, so this was important⁸⁰²). Presumably, since it is in the biblical texts, one could, and probably would, even say, “I am a member of the church at Ephesus” or “a member of the church at Jonas’ house.” The word “member” really implies connectivity, accountability, and community, which is the heart of meeting as an *ekklesia*.

So, we see that being a member of a local church takes a higher degree of responsibility and integrity, and a “member” at Ephesus would be viewed differently, from a trust and accountability standpoint, than simply a believer *living* in Ephesus. I don’t think that a believer simply *living* in Ephesus could rightly say, “I am a member of the assembly that meets in Ephesus,” though I do think he could say, “I am a member of the body of Christ.” No doubt certain biblical earmarks of discipleship and godly expectations would be upon those who called themselves “members” of the local ancient assemblies. *Not* that they wouldn’t accept visitors or outsiders into their meetings, but that there would be an expectation from those calling themselves believers and committed to fellowship and *ekklesia*.

Furthermore, there would be some folks who may be able to “talk the talk” and call themselves members of the church (as the Bible validates that some members aren’t believers), yet they aren’t members of the body of Christ.⁸⁰³ I am not trying to distinguish completely between the body and bride of Christ and the phrase “the church,” but I am trying to distinguish the differences between the invisible, universal, and spiritual church, which is the body and bride of Christ and the church of God, and the physical, visible, and local church assembly.

DEACONS

The Bible has a few specific things to say about who these men and women are. First of all, “deacon” (*diakanos*) simply means “servant,” and is used in the Bible both in secular ways (non-ministry ways, such as a “waiter”), as well as spiritually oriented ways, depending on the context. When used in a spiritual context, the word is often translated as “minister.” In the KJV Bible it appears 37 times as a verb. Fifteen of these times as “minister unto,” 10 times as “serve,” 7 times as “minister,” and 5 times miscellaneous. Additionally, 31 times it occurs as a noun, including 3 times as “deacon,” 20 times as “minister,” and 8 times as “servant.”⁸⁰⁴

KJV Verb	Minister Unto	Serve	Minister	Misc.
37 Total	15	10	7	5
KJV Person	Deacon	Minister	Servant	
31 Total	3	20	8	

⁸⁰² 1 Timothy 1.3 // Titus 1.11 // 2 Peter 2.1 // Revelation 2.24
⁸⁰³ 1 John 2.19 // 2 Peter 2.1 // Matthew 7.15
⁸⁰⁴ Colossians 1.25, 4.7 // 1 Timothy 4.6 // Ephesians 3.7, 6.21 // 2 Corinthians 6.4 // Acts 6.2 // John 12.2 // Luke 12.37, 22.26 // Matthew 20.28 // Mark 1.31 // Romans 15.25 // Philemon 13

The use of the word *deacon* and *minister* is both an action and noun describing all disciples (serving and ministering, as well as servants and ministers), which every member of the body of Christ is called to do. So, in this regard, we are called not just to be members in the local church, but we are all, in some sense, called to be deacons, or servants/ministers. That said, additionally there is a contextually specific use of the word *deacon* to identify certain men and women recognized by the Elders that are called to a higher accountability to assist in specialized ministry and serving functions.

Here is what Paul tells Timothy about these Deacons and what is expected of them.

1 Timothy 3.8-13

⁸ Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹ They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹ Their wives [or “women”] likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³ For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

At our church, our officially recognized Deacons and Ministers would be the Elder-identified and appointed godly servant-leaders that serve at a more sacrificial commitment level and have met the biblical pre-requisites of a Deacon and have gone through further and deeper accountability and testing (see Scripture above).

Important Side Note About Women as Deacons:

Though most Bibles say, “their wives,” the Greek text omits the word “their,” and the word used for “wives” can be translated as either “wives” or “women.” Secondly, having an extra pre-requisite for a Deacon that is not mentioned for an Elder would not seem to make sense. Additionally, female Deacons are present in the Bible (**Romans 16.1**). It seems very likely that women serving as Deacons is a tenable biblical approach.

Additionally, Deacons are always mentioned in context with Elders, as they work closely together. Where the Elders lead through their words (teaching, preaching, etc., as we’ll see in the next section), the Deacons lead through their works (managing the church and overseeing ministry). They are given the role of managing the church’s functions after they have been tested and have been faithful members of the church. Their biblical pre-requisites are nearly identical to those of Elders, outside of the teaching and preaching abilities.

Even with this description of pre-requisites, not much is said about the Deacons’ function, but enough is said to at least give us an idea. In **Acts 6.1-7**, there is a narrative about a situation that arose when the Twelve became overwhelmed with work. They raised up men that were previously acting as members of the church, but because of their good report and work ethic, they were given more specific roles to fulfill the needs (also possibly **Acts 15.22**), with the main intent to be keeping the Elders in the word and in prayer. Though the word “deacon” isn’t used, these men of faith, by their description, would be considered “capital D” Deacons (godly servant-leaders or Ministers) serving the practical needs of the church and yet also often in a context of care, essentially as pastoral assistants.

Acts 6.1-6

¹ In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

Elders

The last group we will mention are Elders. Literally translated as “overseers,” and sometimes translated as “bishops” (as in the NKJV), these men also have pre-requisites outlined in the Scriptures.

Titus 1.5-9

⁵ The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. ⁶ An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless — not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

1 Timothy 3.1-7

¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷ He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

1 Peter 5.1-4

¹ To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds [pastors] of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd [Chief Pastor, aka Jesus] appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Scripturally, these men are called of God to do many functions within the church, including the role to pastor and shepherd (the words “pastor” and “shepherd” are the same words in Greek),⁸⁰⁵ publicly teach and preach the “official” sound doctrine for the local church,⁸⁰⁶ carry out church discipline,⁸⁰⁷ handle finances,⁸⁰⁸ pray for the sick,⁸⁰⁹ equip,⁸¹⁰ and oppose false doctrine.⁸¹¹

In today's day and age, we typically give these men the title of “Pastor,” even though pastoring is actually just one of the functions of an Elder. That said, it isn't wrong, per se, to call our Elders “Pastors,” as they do pastor as a function of an Elder, however their responsibilities go far beyond that, but we do also see in **1 Peter 5.2** and **Acts 20.28** that the term “shepherd” or “shepherding” when used for church leaders is only mentioned as roles of Elders (more on that in the next section).

Therefore, in our church, we view the Scriptures as showing that the actual action of pastoring is synonymous with the role of an Elder; additionally, all Elders should be able to teach,⁸¹² though not all Elders have the role of teaching and preaching publicly.⁸¹³

Also, as previously stated in the section before, in accordance with **1 Timothy 2.12** and other passages, the role of Elder/Pastor is the only office that is occupied only by men, as they are given the actual role to oversee and lead and govern the flock. We hold, however, to what is called a *complementarian* view, which is in line with our view of marriage as well, that men and women are equal in all ways, submitted one to another, but that in accordance to creation, God has given the men the place of submitting through selfless and sacrificial leadership as a picture of Christ and the church.

⁸⁰⁵ Ephesians 4.11 // Matthew 9.36, 25.32, 26.31 // Mark 6.34, 14.27 // Luke 2.8, 15, 18, 20 // John 10.2, 11, 12, 14, 16 // Hebrews 13.20 // 1 Peter 2.25

⁸⁰⁶ Ephesians 4.11 // 1 Timothy 3.2, 5.17

⁸⁰⁷ Matthew 18.15-17

⁸⁰⁸ 1 Peter 5.1-3

⁸⁰⁹ James 5.13-15

⁸¹⁰ Ephesians 4.11-16 // 2 Timothy 2.1, 2

⁸¹¹ Acts 20.17-31

⁸¹² 1 Timothy 3.2

⁸¹³ 1 Timothy 5.17

Elders are entrusted the public teaching, preaching, and directing of their local church body, and thusly are called to a higher standard of living. Elders should be men who meet the biblical requirements of Elders and are called by God to oversee the overall direction and vision of a corporate, local church.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PASTORING AND MINISTERING

First, the word *poimen* (noun: pastor, shepherd) is found 18 times in the New Testament.⁸¹⁴ Of those times, 15 times were used as an actual shepherd of sheep or cattle, twice it was used to describe Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and once it was used to describe a certain Christian function. Then, the verb tense of the word, *poimaino*, is mentioned 11 times. Four times it's used to describe spiritual feeding, once being the feeding of false teaching, 4 times it is used to describe rule (usually of Christ's rule in **Revelation**), and twice it means to feed cattle.

So we see that only a combined five times is it used to describe a function in the body of Christ, and four out of those five times specifically are mentioned in context with the function of an Elder, or Overseer. The one that doesn't have the word "Elder" in context is **Ephesians 4.11**, when speaking of the different types of roles of believers given to the church as a gift. This would tell us, though, that in conjunction with the other Scriptures working together, we see that when "Pastors" are given to the church in this passage that they are therefore implied to be Elders, since a derivative of "pastor" is only found elsewhere in conjunction with eldership.

In today's age, we view a shepherd as someone who nurtures, cares for, and cuddles with lambs. However, in the New Testament's day and age, shepherds were known to be strong, healthy, manly, tough, and in top shape. They had to go against wolves to protect the flock. These men endured the cold, the night, and isolation. A wealthy man who owned a large flock would entrust only certain men as shepherds to *oversee* the *whole flock*, not just tend to a select group of sheep with needs. These men had to be of noble character, honest, and full of integrity to ensure that these men wouldn't abandon his flock at the sign of trouble, or even steal or sell the flock unlawfully.⁸¹⁵



Russell Crowe/Eddie Vedder as Jesus.

All said, in accordance with Scripture, we see the Pastors of our church as the men that God has called to oversee the *entire* local flock; men that war against the wolves on behalf of the sheep, carry out church discipline, and endure the unique hardships of overseeing the flock. This is done all for the flock's well-being, health, and protection.

In a nutshell, here is a little visual breakdown of some of the roles and responsibilities that Members, Deacons, and Elders would carry out amidst their life within the body of Christ.

⁸¹⁴ Ephesians 4.11 // Matthew 9.36, 25.32, 26.31 // Mark 6.34, 14.27 // Luke 2.8, 15, 18, 20 // John 10.2, 11, 12, 14, 16 // Hebrews 13.20 // 1 Peter 2.25

⁸¹⁵ John 10.12, 13

Responsibilities and Roles of Members, Deacons, and Elders

MEMBERS	DEACONS	ELDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister one to another • Serve amongst the church • Grow in discipleship and faith • Build up others • Confront others • Fulfilling needs within the church • Knowing and growing in right doctrine • Give of time, treasure, talents • Praying for the sick • Walking in spiritual gifts • Counseling, praying, caring for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister one to another • Serve amongst the church • Grow in discipleship and faith • Build up others • Confront others • Fulfilling needs within the church • Knowing, growing in, teaching right doctrine • Give of time, treasure, talents • Praying for the sick • Walking in spiritual gifts • Counseling, praying, caring for others <p>IN ADDITION, DEACONS ALSO...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee ministry teams • Lead other leaders • Training and equipping Members • Growing in leadership • Carrying out the vision of the church • Managing specifics in the church • Taking care of the church's needs 	<p>IN ADDITION TO MEMBERS and DEACON ROLES...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoring and shepherding the flock • Steering the church • Publicly establishing doctrine for church • Publicly refuting false doctrine for church • Public teaching and preaching • Edifying the whole church • Church discipline • Handling finances • Managing overarching affairs of church • Establishing overall vision • Equipping the church for ministry • Raising up and Overseeing Deacons • Passing along ministry • Walking in spiritual gifts

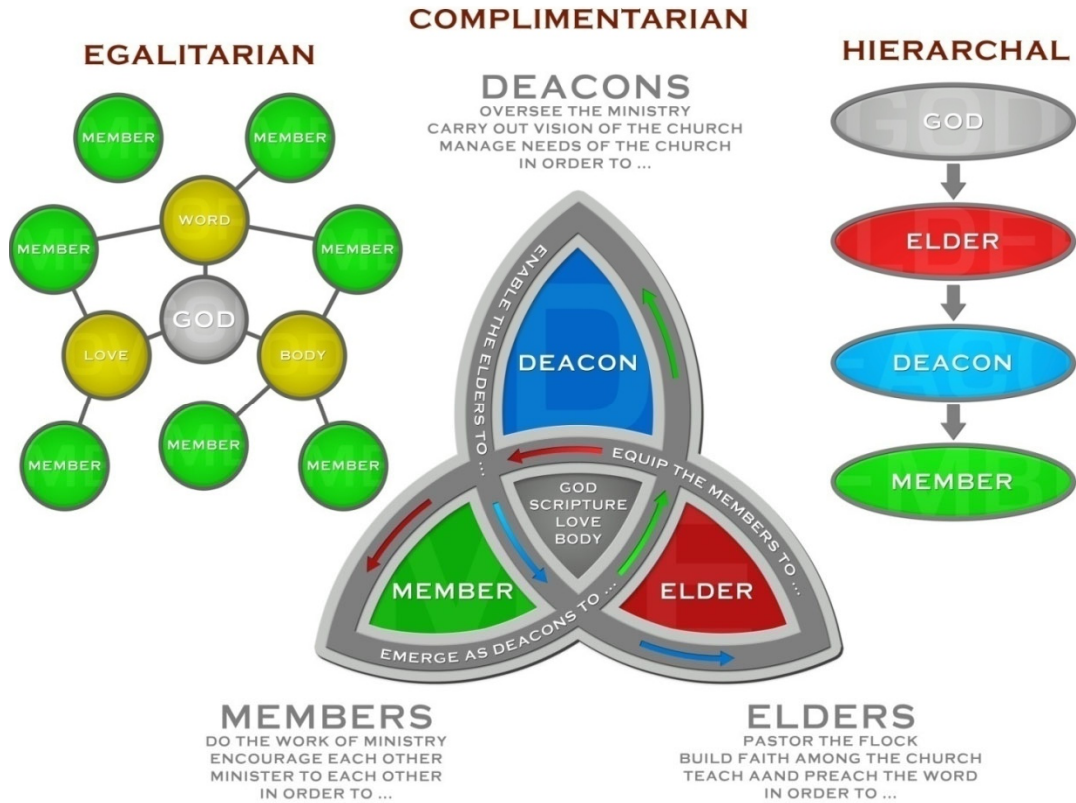
As you can see and have read, to *complement* the Elders, we have Deacons, or Ministers. These men and women are given a great deal of responsibility within the flock. In **Acts 6** we see that they took care of widows, a *very* important task in the eyes of the Lord.⁸¹⁶ These Deacons *do the work of the ministry* in all capacities outside of the specific duties of the Elders. Deacons and Ministers will indeed minister to others, pray for them, teach them, support them, confront them in sin, lead ministries, take meals to folks in need, lead people to Christ, pour into adults, youth and children, and countless other ways to bring glory to our Lord.

However, it is given to Pastors/Elders to carry out such things as church discipline (though we are all to confront sin), guide the whole flock by public teaching and preaching (though we are all to encourage and come alongside each other and teach each other), and establish and oppose good and bad doctrine respectively (though we are all to know right doctrine and oppose bad doctrine when we see it). The differentiating factor is the *public* and *official* responsibility of shepherding of the entire flock is left to the Pastors/Elders. The Elders pastor the flock, and everyone, Elders included, minister one to another.

It should be noted here that although we are particularly pointing out “capital ‘D’” Deacons, Members who aren’t “Deaconized” are *still* “deacons” in the sense that we are *all* to serve (*diakonos*). Not only that, but these “non-Deacon” Members, by their active service and commitment, equally enable both the Deacons and Elders to function in their role, which every Member then benefits from.

⁸¹⁶ James 1.2.

The picture, of course, is a diverse, inter-reliant, inter-dependent body of Christ.



In this chart, the egalitarian structure is organic, unstructured, and lacks real accountability and synergy. On the opposite end is the hierarchal system. This is a “chain of command” and is authoritarian in nature, not just in church but in the marriage and family structure. The middle is complimentarian, where, like the Trinity, there is submission amid equality. It is a mutually edifying structure with accountability, community, and is centered on the Trinitarian God.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

Why a Biblical View of the Church is Necessary

Result #1: We become more selfless and more like Christ.

Once we see how expansive and communal this salvation is, it completely changes our outlook. As Christians, and particularly as American Christians, we are so driven by individuality and privacy. I'm not saying that these two things are bad or don't have a place in our faith, but has largely become our *mindset*. Not to get political or make any assertions, but as much as talk about rights, invasion of privacy, Patriot Act, TSA screening, WikiLeaks, health care reform, and anything like that, it can very easily seep its way into our spiritual mindset.⁸¹⁷ We can *easily* see ourselves as autonomous Christians who have the "right" to live out our faith how we see fit.

The Kingdom of God is vastly different from how our American minds think. We are a people, a single body, under our head, who is Jesus. We don't have the "right" to go and do our own thing as we please, but we are to be accountable to each other, working together, living at peace and in community with each other. Each part of the body needs the other part. It is the body *collectively* that Christ works through to bring glory to God. It is the unification of the body and the synergy of us working jointly in union with Him that makes us effective. Christ's goal is to use us, His body, to fill the universe with His glory.

The mandate for us to be in fellowship with, accountable to, vulnerable with, and committed to is not optional. It is a command, and it is one of *the* two main commands He gave us! Love God and love people!

**If you struggle with being generous, spend time studying this.
It will change your heart and change your life.**

Result #2: We understand God's role as loving Father more.

Many struggle with accepting or appreciating the doctrine of election and God's sovereignty and the choices we make. *No one* understands it completely, but many struggle with even accepting it. The thought cannot be put to rest that asks, "well, if God already chose everything, then why go share the Gospel and pray?"

When we look at the church and God's purpose in the church, we see a very awesome and unbelievably humble truth. God *wants to share* in this great and wonderful work of salvation with *us*, His kids! The thing is, the question is a legitimate one; God *could have* simply chose everyone and then magically whisked them all off into salvation. *But He didn't!* Though *He* is the one who declares it, He has also graciously *chosen to use us* in it!

He does this because He is a Dad who is incredibly in love with His kids! He loves to share the joy of creation and salvation. Not that we create and save in the same way that He does; nor do we even technically have anything to offer in the salvation itself, as it is all by God's grace, but the fact that He *chooses* to have us along for the ride and use us as the *vehicle* for salvation is mind blowing!

I would liken it to myself and my two boys. I love working around the house. I like to make stuff, build stuff, create stuff, paint stuff, you name it. Because the boys see me do this a lot, they love to help me. Now, as a dad, I could just say, "no, boys, this is daddy's work. I don't want you to get hurt, I have to do this myself." I am *more than capable* of doing it myself, and I will get it done faster. But, what do I do? I *love* that they want to be involved, so I find places that they can help with. It's not that I need the help. I don't. And I could do it faster and more efficiently.

But I love my kids, and I love to be involved with them, and I love that they love to be with me and being about their father's business.

⁸¹⁷ Seriously, I'm not saying any of these are bad or good, but that they can play a part in our whole mindset. We have to constantly be on guard with this, no matter what it is. If we are businessmen, we can turn our faith into a contract, if we are lawyers or cops, we can turn it into legalism and rule-following. No matter what your background is, it can influence your faith, so be mindful.

And you know what that does? This may sound odd at first, but I will explain: it glorifies me as their dad.

The fact that my kids *love to be with me* and work with me is a testimony to my parenting. Again, I don't mean for this to sound egotistical like I'm some professional dad, but by God's grace, I love my boys so much I do go out of my way to involve them, and it shows.

When we, God's children, *love to be around Him* and love to be about His business, it glorifies Him. It shows the world (and other Christians), by example, that we have an awesome Father who is *worth* being around. That being said, God loves to partner with us in the salvation of those that He has called. Yes, He has already chosen them before the foundations of the world, and yes, He could have just beamed them up to heaven. But He didn't, and He didn't for a few reasons:

- **It glorifies Him more because it *proves* and is *evidence* to others His glorious grace.**
When our lives and motives are changed and we become more and more like Him and are selflessly serving, His "parenting" is glorified.
- **It slaps the enemy in the face.**
Satan hates God, but Satan also hates us. Satan wanted more than what he had and was punished for it. So he went after us, because we are God's creation. But now, by God's grace, not only has God, in His mercy and grace, devised a plan to spare some of us, but then He *uses us* and *lets us join Him* in His great work! Talk about heaping insult on top of insult!
- **It brings more praise to His glorious grace.**
What better way to get to know Him than by working alongside of Him? What better way to know His grace than by seeing it at work in the people that we love? What better way to understand His heart than by doing the things that He loves to do?
- **He wants us to see the importance of community, family, accountability, and unity.**
His invitation to us to be the ones who fill everything with His glory puts such a major emphasis on His love and passion for family. He doesn't just say "it is not good for man to be alone," but He *lives* it, first of all, in the Trinity, that He is a communal, family-based God; but also in His design to invite us into His work of redemption. We will rule and reign with Christ in the Kingdom, and we are being inaugurated into this even *now*!

Result #3: It changes the lens you see all of Scripture through.

When it comes to how you view the relationship between the church and Israel, coming to some understanding of what you believe will radically change how you see and read the entire Bible, in particular, the Old Testament. On a secondary, and not as critical level, it also changes the way you see God's plan unfold in these last days.

We're going to look at this more next week, so don't be discouraged if these terms and ideas are a little over your head right now. I explain them a little bit more on page 137 and 138 when we talked about the covenants. So far, this whole study has been through the lens of Covenant Theology, but more specifically, New Covenant Theology.

For the record, I am *mostly* New Covenant, which as an offshoot of Covenant, but there are parts of Progressive Dispensationalism that I am still studying (New Covenant and Progressive Dispensationalism look incredibly similar. It's the two "sides" sitting on the same fence looking at each other's side). Of this list, New Covenant theology disagrees with traditional Covenant Theology and agrees with dispensationalism in that it sees that the whole entire Law was fulfilled and that we as New Covenant believers are to obey the "law of Christ," which includes, of course, all of His teachings (which ratified nine out of ten of the Ten Commandments), but also the Great Commandment: to love God and love people, using the Word and the Holy Spirit as our guide and source.

To help you get a grasp on the two main “sides,” here is a chart which shows the stance of each. For the record, know that each side has various offshoots, so this isn’t exact, nor the “only” way these two sides see the Word.

DISPENSATIONALISM	COVENANT
Can be Arminian or Modified Calvinist/Reformed. Almost never 5 point Calvinist	Never Arminian.
Usually doesn’t accept the “analogy of faith” or “analogy of Scripture.	Accepts the “analogy of faith” or “analogy of Scripture” (allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture).
“Israel” is always literal, physical descendants of Jacob. Rigid literalism.	“Israel” is either physical descendants of Jacob or “spiritual” descendants, depending on the context. Carefully allows, depending on context, both literal and symbolic interpretation.
God has two peoples with two separate destinies: Israel’s will be earthly and the church will be heavenly.	God has always had one people. The church was grafted in with Israel so they share, as one, the covenant promises made.
The church was not prophesied in the OT, but was totally hidden.	The church was prophesied in the OT; we see those prophecies clearly now, though they were mysterious at the time.
All OT prophecies for Israel are only for Israel, never for the church.	Some OT prophecies are for the literal nation of Israel, others are for all of God’s people, which is spiritual Israel.
God’s main purpose in history is the literal Israel.	God’s main purpose in history is Christ, and then His body.
The church is a parenthesis in God’s redemptive plan.	The church is the culmination of God’s redemptive plan.
No Covenant of Redemption within the Trinity.	There was a Covenant of Redemption within the Trinity.
The New Covenant of Jeremiah 31.31-34 is only for literal Israel, and is not the New Covenant spoken of by Jesus in Luke 22.20	The New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 is the same as the one Jesus spoke of, as shown in Hebrews 8 .
Pre-mil, and usually believe in a Pre-trib rapture.	Usually Amil, or Post-mil, sometimes Historic Pre-mil and almost never believe in a Pre-trib rapture. (More on these topics next chapter)
OT animal sacrifices will be restored in the Millennium	OT sacrifices were fulfilled by Christ.
The millennium will fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant. Physical Israel has a physical future.	Christ fulfilled the Abrahamic Covenant. Some Covenant theologians believe there is some kind of literal future for national Israel, but most don’t; they simply believe that spiritual Israel has a shared future (as the body and bride of Christ).
David will sit on the Millennial throne in Jerusalem.	Jesus alone will sit on His throne.

You may notice how crazy it is that so many various doctrines are intricately connected to each other. Once again, we have to see that we can't simply just do "buffet theology," picking and choosing what we like and don't like. We have to build the clear foundation first and then add to it the less dominant studies.

One example is this: if you notice that Arminians are never Covenant Theology Christians. Why not? What if an Arminian likes the Covenant positions? Can't they be Arminian and Covenant?

No, they can't, because Covenant Theology is built on the premises of the Reformed view of unconditional election, irresistible grace, etc. It is *called* Covenant Theology because it believes that it is *God* who chose to covenant with us and keep His covenant by His own grace and sovereignty, *not* on our ability or inability to keep it. Arminians believe that it is up to them to choose and persevere in faith. It is not covenant based. Therefore, an Arminian must give up some of his or her soteriology views if they like Covenant Theology better than Dispensational Theology.

I know it gets confusing, but once again, don't worry if it overwhelms you. As a matter of fact, get patiently used to it. This isn't a race (my kids always say that to each other when one is eating faster or brushing their teeth faster than the other!); it's a marathon. Focus on the main and plain, but also challenge yourself; be humble, patient, and willing to re-learn things when you happen upon other things. It's a lifelong journey, and well worth the hard work.

PRACTICAL TOOLS

♣ Definition of Terms ♣

Body/Bride of Christ: This is the most often used term to describe the universal/invisible/eternal/spiritual church of God. The *only* people in this category are true believers who make up the body of Christ.

Dispensationalism: This is a “lens” by which people view the overall story of the Bible. It sees that God relates differently with people during various different periods of time, or dispensations. In general, there is a major distinction between the church and Israel, and they are seen as two distinct peoples of God. There are a few variations, however.

Covenant Theology: This is a “lens” that people see the whole overall story of the Bible through. It sees that God has had one singular plan for His people from the beginning, called a covenant. They see that God has, from day one, called people unto Himself “by grace through faith,” not differently throughout various areas. There are a few variations of this, as well.

Ekklesia: This is a Greek word that means “assembly,” and even more specifically an assembly that is “called out.” It is noted as an assembly with purpose and function, not just gathering together. Our English Bibles translate this as “church.” An overwhelming majority of the time this word is used in the Word (104 out of 114 times) it is used to describe a physical assembly of believers, whether across the world or in a home.

Koinonia: Koinonia is the word used for “communion” or “fellowship” in our English Bibles. I point this one out specifically because I find that many Christians believe that this is all that is required to “be the church.” But it is important for us to see that koinonia is simply one of the things that the church (ekklesia) does.

Egalitarianism: This is the view of human relationship that sees equality in all areas. The prefix “egal-” means “equal.” Of course, as noted in the study, there is for sure an equality among all humanity as God’s people, but there are also distinctive differences, hence the following term, *complementarian*. An egalitarian mindset dramatically shapes how you interact with the various relationships in your life, particularly in the area of accountability.

Complementarian: This term, in context human relationships, helps explain the dynamic relationship between each other. We know that we are equal in who we are in Christ, yet we are distinct in our roles and interaction with each other. It simply means that in our equality *and* our differences, we *complement* each other. In a complementarian structure, there is a clear perception of partnership, yet with defined roles and responsibilities.

Hierarchical: This is a more domineering approach to relationships. It is much more clear-cut authoritative with a “top down” mentality. Not much leeway or partnership is given to those in the relationship.

Recommended Resources

Theology Books

Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem. Chapters 44-50 deal with the nature of the church, purity in the church, power of the church, church government, means of grace within the church, baptism, and communion.

Salvation Belongs to the Lord by John Frame. Chapters 18-21 cover the themes in this chapter.

Books

The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor by John Stott. John Stott has been a pastor for over 60 years at one church, All Souls in London. His legacy of a committed shepherd is shown throughout this book. Anyone who wants to see what a good, healthy church looks like, in theory and in practice, would do well by reading this book.

Deep Church by Jim Belcher. This is a book written as a conversation between the orthodox church and the emergent church. Belcher is friends with “both sides,” while remaining in the orthodox church. He talks about what marks are necessary for a good, healthy, orthodox church and what we can and should agree on, and where he assesses the dividing line should be.

Church History in Plain Language by Bruce Shelley. A great resource for understanding our spiritual “heritage” from the time of Christ until now.

Eusebius’ “the Church History” by Eusebius. Eusebius’ writings from the 3rd century A.D. give us a great picture of what was commonplace the first couple hundred years of the church.

Hippolytus on the Apostolic Tradition by Hippolytus. Hippolytus give us a great insights into what the church was doing in its first 150 years.

Total Church by Chester and Timmis

The Didache and Ancient Christian Writings include, of course, *the Didache*, which was a “pastor’s manual” written around 100 A.D., the Epistles of Polycarp, Barnabas, and others. Not to be regarded as Scripture, they do give us great historical insight into the workings and practices of the early church.

One Faith by J.I. Packer and Thomas Oden. Packer and Oden, though both not in agreement on everything themselves (Packer is a Reformed teacher and Oden is an Arminian), co-authored this book compiling orthodox statements of faith from many denominations and ministries. Their aim is an ecumenical unity that is centered around the “closed handed” doctrines of faith.

Understanding Dispensationalism by Vern Poythress.

Feminine Appeal by Carolyn Mahaney

The Cross Centered Life by C.J. Mahaney

Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem.

God, Marriage, and Family by Andreas Kostenberger. This book is said to have no equal on this topic. A very thorough, well written book on such an important topic.

Sermons

www.christianessentialsbc.com/messages This is Wayne Grudem's sermons going through his book, *Systematic Theology*. Go to the sermons on Chapters 44-50.

www.desiringgod.org This is John Piper's ministry. Along with audio or video sermons, he has the transcripts as well. Type into the search field on desiringgod.org to find these audio sermons that have attached articles. Simply type in "church," "Israel" "atonement," etc.

- "His Body: The Fullness of Him Who Fills All in All."
- "The Meaning of Membership and Church Accountability"
- "Israel and Us Reconciled in One Body"
- "One Lord, One Spirit, One Body for All Time and All Peoples"
- "The New Covenant and the New Covenant People"
- "Beautifying the Body of Christ"
- "How Christ Enables the Church to Upbuild Itself in Love"
- "Is it important for me to become a member of my local church?"
- "Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood"

Web Articles

www.monergism.com is a great site in general, but this particular link has a lot of information on ecclesiology.

www.gotquestions.org If you tend to have lots of questions in general, this is a great website to get to know. Go here and search "church," "dispensationalism," "covenant theology," "new covenant theology," body of Christ," "baptism," "communion," you name it.

NAME THAT THEOLOGIAN: EPISODE II

- One of the singing statues on the Haunted Mansion ride
- Martha Stewart's stunt double
- The guy who looks like an SNL impression of George W. Bush
- The guy dressed as Goofy for Halloween
- The guy who should have used more sun block
- The guy whose photo looks like it was on his real estate business card
- The guy who looks like a police detective from a '50s TV show
- Santa Claus' Second Cousin Twice Removed
- The guy who looks exactly like Jerry Falwell

John Darby
Kay Arthur
D.A. Carson
Richard Baxter
Chuck Missler
Norman Geisler
Meredith Kline
J.C. Ryle
Jerry Falwell

