

**The Church (Acts 2:42–47)**  
**By Pastor Jeff Alexander (1/24/2021)**

**Introduction**

1. What is a church? The first mention of the term is found in Jesus' declaration to Peter, "*I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" (Matthew 16:18).

The English word *church* is derived from Old English "*cirice*," which in turn came from the German "*kirika*," derived from the Greek "*kuriake*," meaning "of the Lord" or "the Lord's."

2. The Greek term translated church is *ekklesia*, which means *assembly* or *congregation*. In Jesus' day, the term referred to calling out citizens to assemble in order to attend to the business of the state (Acts 19:32, 39, 40).

The church, as a divine union of those whom Jesus redeems, reflects the OT covenant assembly. "*The whole assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded*" (2 Chronicles 29:28). "*From you comes my praise in the great congregation [assembly]; my vows I will perform before those who fear him*" (Psalm 22:25). In typical Hebrew fashion, an important truth is expressed in two ways: (1) those who fear God compose the assembly, and (2) they assemble to worship God.

Considering the biblical picture of what a church looks like, what should we expect of the modern church?

**I. The Essence of the Church**

The church is a community initiated and controlled by God Himself.

1. God, through Christ, established the church as a *community* of believers to glorify His name. Jesus died to establish this community by shedding His blood, which is the focus of the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 11:25).
2. While His servants may sow and water the gospel seed, it is only God who gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6, 7).
3. Jesus owns the church. He called it "*my church*." Our English word *church* comes from "*kuriake*," a possessive—the Lord's. It is the Lord's assembly.
4. The church is built up of "*living stones*" forming a "*spiritual house*," the temple of the Lord (1 Peter 2:4, 5; Ephesians 2:22; Hebrews 8:5–7).

**II. The Covenant Nature of the Church**

This covenant community has three identifying characteristics.

1. It is a communion of saints built on *love* that results in spiritual *unity* (Galatians 5:13, 14).

The communion they have with one another in God cannot be in their own things, but in what they share in Christ: life, light, love, power, peace, and joy (Hebrews 10:24–25).

2. It is a communion of saints built on *holiness* (John 17:17; Colossians 1:12–14).

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3. It is a communion of saints in the *truth* (1 Timothy 3:15).

- a. The church was *established* on the truth (Ephesians 2:19–22).
- b. The church is to be *governed* by the truth (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).
- c. The church is to be the *steward* of the truth (Jude 3).
- d. The church is to be the *confessor* of truth (Matthew 28:18–20).

## Conclusion

The church is a redeemed people sanctified in Jesus Christ and the truth of the Word of God and pursuing holiness in their daily walk. So, let us turn our attention to the infant church revealed in Acts 2:42–47.

1. The *whole assembly* was characterized by attentive *devotion* to the risen Lord in worship and service.
  - a. Who are “they” of verse 42? Verse 41 reads, “*Those who received his word* [the message of Peter delivered on the day of Pentecost] *were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*” It is these, united in the new fledgling church, who devoted themselves. The evidence of their true conversion was their *obedience*.
  - b. What exactly was their obedient response in their salvation? “*They devoted themselves to* [something]” (v. 42).
    - 1) Because these people believed on Christ, they did a complete about-face from their former life-style and devoted [*proskartereo*] themselves to Christ and one another.
    - 2) Being *devoted* means to be steadfastly attentive to, persevering and not giving up in one’s pursuit of the purpose and design of life in the church, constantly aware of the truth that the risen Lord Christ is ruling in the midst of His churches (Revelation 1:9–20). God designed His church for so much more than most Christians in America are experiencing today.
2. This devotion was evidenced in four activities:
  - a. *The apostles’ teaching* refers to learning and expounding the Word of God.
  - b. *The fellowship (koinonia)* reveals that all the saints participated as the body of Christ.
  - c. *The breaking of bread* (communion) memorializes the body participating in their covenant Head, Jesus Christ.
  - d. *The prayers* (the *place* of prayer because of the definite article), show the saints, enabled and empowered by the Spirit, consistently humbled and submitted themselves in assembly to the will of God in everything by prayer (Ephesians 6:18).

Do these activities characterize your life in the church?