

The Church: Its Nature, Its Marks, and Its Purposes

What is necessary to make a church? How can we recognize a true church? The purposes of the church.

The Nature of the Church

Grudem's definition: "The church is the community of all true believers for all time."

My own clarifications: The church consists of believers from both the OT and NT era. The church consists of believers from all *ethnicities*.

"I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 8:11–12, ESV)

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation," (Revelation 5:9, ESV)

The Church is Local and Universal

In the New Testament the word "church" may be applied to a group of believers at any level, ranging from a "house church" to all true believers in the universal church.

The House Church - "Greet also *the church in their [Prisca and Aquila's] house*" (Romans 16:5); "The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with *the church in their house*, send you hearty greetings in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 16:19)

The City Church - "The church of God that is in Corinth" (1 Co 1:2), "the church of the Thessalonians" (1 Th 1:1)

The Regional Church - “So *the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria* had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.” (Acts 9:31)

The World Church - “Christ loved the *church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25).

*Some make use of a capital C to make a distinction from the local church. The small c refers to the local church whereas the capital C refers to the church universal.

The Apostles and the Church - “*God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers...*” (1 Corinthians 12:28). Grudem argues that since the apostles were not given to any specific church, the reference is to the church universal (The Church).

Conclusions/Applications: A house church