

What defines the church

Jesus built?

Whose church is it?

1 Corinthians 3:11(NIV) *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Matthew 16:18(NIV) *And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*

Ephesians 4:3-6(NIV) *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

This makes it clear. There can be only one church. It must be the church Jesus built so it must be His church, not named after a man and not divided.

When was it established?

Acts 2:41-42(NIV) *Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.* This is the real beginning of the church. Pentecost, or the 50th day after the Passover when Jesus died and was raised again. That puts it about AD 33.

What is it called?

When I read the New Testament I see the early church often referred to as "the Way" (Acts 9:2), churches of Christ (Rom 16:16), church of God (Acts 20:28), the believers (Acts 5:12) or simply the church (Acts 8:1). Though they did not carry a formal name, in every case what characterized the church

was the same and it was recognized by everyone around them as the same group.

Who is the "head"?

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

Colossians 1:18(NIV) *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.* Obviously from these verses there is only one "head" of the church and that is Jesus Christ. No man, no council. Just Jesus!

Who are the local leaders?

Acts 14:23(NIV) *Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

So the apostles who were appointed by Jesus were appointing elders in each church to oversee the local work. In **1 Timothy 3:1-11** it describes the qualifications for these elders very specifically. **1 Timothy 5:17(NIV)** *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

1 Timothy 2:5(NIV) *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,* So, there is no man who mediates or is between us and God except Jesus. He is the Head, elders (also called pastors, overseers, presbyters) are leaders in each congregation but they are only for that one congregation.

Who else is involved in the church?

When I read in **Romans 12:5-8(NIV)** *so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.* Sounds like we all have our own role as designed by Christ for His body.

Are the congregations independent?

Every congregation is independent except for all having the one common Head - Jesus. Elders in one place have no authority over a different place.

What creed or rules govern it?

Ephesians 4:3-6(NIV) *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.* If there is only one of these things then there can be only one set of rules. No "creed book" or set of laws. Just the Bible!

What goes on during the assembly?

Lord's Supper each Sunday:

Acts 20:7(NIV) *On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.* The early church came together on Sunday (first day of the

week) and they broke bread, which is the communion, or Lord's Supper, as commanded by Jesus in **1 Corinthians 11:24(NIV)** *and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."*

Singing:

Colossians 3:16(NIV) *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.* Interesting that I don't read anything about any instrument. So why add to it?

Worship passionately and in accordance with God's word (the truth):

John 4:24(NIV) *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*

Prayers and study:

Acts 2:42(NIV) *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

Is there an opportunity to give to benefit others?

1 Corinthians 16:2(NIV) *On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Give on Sunday and it is supposed to be used to help others as the elders have planned.*

How are people added to the church?

Acts 2:47(NIV) *praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Since the Lord is adding to the church it is not a matter of joining or being voted in. Once we become Christians we are automatically part of **His church!**

Am I part of the church Jesus built?

We are here to help you!

We would sincerely like the opportunity to talk with you more about this subject and share what God's word says about it. As Jesus said, **John 8:32(NIV)** " *Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*"

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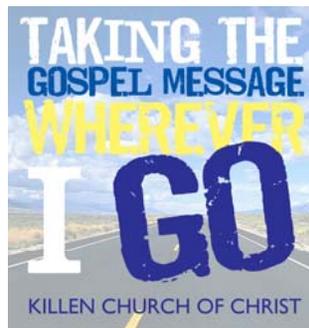
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