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DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**SPIRIT OF LIFE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL  
MINISTRY SCHOOL  
SESSION 50: THE CHURCH Part 1**

Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 "***I will build my church***".

Church (Ecclesia) is used in the New Testament to designate any assembly whether it be **political**, (Acts 19:39) Christian (Ephesians 1:22, 23) or **national** (Acts 7:38).

It means a **called-out assembly, or congregation**. When God called Israel out of Egypt they congregated in the wilderness; they were "the church in the wilderness". Today, God calls the saved out of the world to congregate in worship. This is the church in the world, in it but not of it.

Unlike the church in the wilderness, the church that Jesus is building will never cease. He said, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." His church is not synonymous with Christendom; it is in Christendom in the same way in which it is in the world, in it but not of it. Christendom is made up of those who profess to be Christians, but they know not Christ, as a personal Savior (Matthew 7:21-23), II Tim. 3:5; and Titus 1:16) only blood washed, born again Spirit baptized believers constitute the church that Jesus is building.

In Modern English the word Church is used in several ways.

- 1. A building**  
(Ephesians 2:10-22) designated as a place of worship, such as a church building;
- 2. The Bride of Christ,**  
which consists of all who profess faith in Christ, regardless of particular theological beliefs; (II Cor. 11:2)
- 3. A denomination;**  
or a single organized Christian group, such as a local church.
- 4. The Body of Christ,**  
meaning the universal Church. (I Cor.12:12-21)

## 5. It is called a mystery

In Ephesians 3:3-10.

While all of these are legitimate uses for modern English, the word church is used in the New Testament in only the last two senses – a local church, or the body of Christ, and the universal church. At its root the word Church means a “called-out group”. It is used of the nation Israel (Acts 7:38) which was a group of people who were called out of the rest of the people of the world to have a special national relationship to God. It is used of a local church in I Thess 1:1 it is called the Church of the Thessalonians; Rev. 2:1 says Church of Ephesus, etc., and of the universal church, the Body of Christ in Col. 1:18. The universal church comprises all believers from the Day of Pentecost until the time God takes the church out of the world, and at which time His program for the church will be complete. The local church is a local, visible, temporal manifestation of the universal church. At one point in history, the local and universal churches were identical (Acts 2:41). The universal church will not meet entirely again until we all get to heaven, and once there will never cease.

## THE CHURCH: IT'S FOUNDATION

Matthew 16:13 Jesus asked His disciples, ***“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”*** They answered naming some of the prophets. Then He said unto them, ***“but whom say ye that I am?”*** Peter answered, ***“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*** In verse thirteen Jesus spoke of Himself as ***“the Son of man.”*** Now Peter speaks of Him as the ***“Son of the living God.”*** Jesus blessed Peter and said that this great truth came from God the Father. Again He said to Peter ***“Thou art Peter, (Petros, a little rock) and upon this rock (Petra, a big rock) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*** Simon Peter called Jesus the “living Stone” the chief “Corner Stone” a “Stone of stumbling.” And a “Rock of offense.” He spoke of all believers, including himself, as “living stones.” Jesus Christ is the foundation and believers are the building stones (I Peter 2:1-10).

Paul speaks of Christ as the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets (Ephesians 2:19-22). He also said, ***“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”*** (I Cor. 3:11).

The church was a mystery (hidden, not revealed) in the Old Testament, yet Isaiah said, **“thus saith the Lord God, behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation”** (Isaiah 28:16 OT). Christ is the sure foundation of His church and all believers are little building stones built into a Holy Temple in the Lord.

It was prophesied in these words spoken to Peter (Matt. 16:18) **“upon this rock I will build my church”** In this prophecy there is a play on the word rock which also happens to be Peter’s name. Jesus said, **“Thou art Peter” (masculine, petros) and “upon this rock (feminine, petra) I will build my church.”**

But when did the church actually begin? Again, many suggestions are offered for varying reasons.

Let’s look at John 20:21. Jesus appeared to his disciples on the first day of the week, when the doors were shut. He said **“Peace be unto you”** the first time. He revealed his hands and his side to them. Thomas was absent.

The disciples recognized him and were glad when they saw the Lord. He said, **“peace be unto you”** the second time, and **said “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”** He breathed on them and said **“Receive ye the Holy Ghost”**. See Genesis 2:7 ~ and the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

The simplest view is to understand the New Testament church as beginning on the Day of Pentecost. The “church” received the fullness on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit filled each believer, and they spoke with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Then, in response to Peter’s Pentecostal sermon when “the same day there were added unto them (the apostles) about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41). This group for the first time is called “the church” in Acts 2:47, and God added to their number daily those who were saved.