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**SPIRIT OF LIFE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL
BIBLE SCHOOL THIRD EDITION
SESSION 29: THE CHURCH**

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

as a designated place of worship, such as a church building or in a home. **Acts 2:46**

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**; **Ephesians 2:18-22**)

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** where 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 16:13-18 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.” Jesus 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**). 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 20:21-22**. 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.

THE PURPOSES OF THE CHURCH

Ephesians 3:21 - ***“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen”.*** ***The ultimate purpose of the church is to bring honor and glory to its head – Jesus Christ.*** It does this as it fulfills its two purposes related to God’s program for the world.

1. ***The first purpose*** of the church, as it relates to the world, is ***evangelism***. This program is spelled out in the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19, 20**), which has never been rescinded. This purpose is to ***“teach all nations.”*** The way this is to be done is ***twofold***:
 - A. by ***baptizing them*** in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

1. Water Baptism is not an optional afterthought. It is a vital part of evangelism and making disciples. By baptism, one indicates that he has been identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (that is, he is a member of the universal church, the Body of Christ) and wishes to be identified with the local church. A responsible parent not only brings a child into the world, but also provides what is necessary for the child's growth. So, in the church, teaching must accompany evangelism, so that the child of God can learn all that God expects of him and has provided for him. True water baptism is by immersion, not by sprinkling. In the Old Testament they sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the altar. In the New Testament Jesus was our example of true water baptism. He was immersed in the river by John the Baptist.
2. Baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is a vital part of the Christian's walk. John the Baptist said there was one coming after him that would baptize you with the Holy Ghost fire. Jesus said in **Acts 1:8** *"But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"*. This power to be a witness is absolutely necessary for a Christian to be able to be a personal evangelist to others. It also opens the door to all of the other spiritual gifts listed in **I Corinthians 12**.
 - B. **Teaching them** to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The Church is to teach us the doctrine (teachings) of Jesus Christ, along with the authority of the believer through the teachings of the Epistles written by Paul, John, and Peter. Without these being taught the average Christian remains powerless in his or her walk. Many struggle daily because they haven't been taught.
2. The **second purpose** of the church as it relates to the world is **edification**. According to **Ephesians 4:12**, the saints need to be edified (built up) for **two** reasons:
 - A. *"...for the perfecting of the saints"* We are to be taught so we can come into maturity. So many Christians are still drinking milk when they should be eating meat.

B. and **“for the work of the ministry.”** The believers who compose the church’s membership need to be built up so that they may realize all that God has provided for Christian living and that they may come to spiritual maturity. They also need to be equipped to perform that work in the Body of Christ that God wants them to perform. In a very real sense, each member of the church is to be a Christian worker so that the work that God wants to perform through the local church can be accomplished.

THE OFFICES OF THE CHURCH

The New Testament uses many terms to describe the leadership of the church:

1. **“Elder”** which comes from the Greek word presbuteros which places emphasis upon the authority that the leadership has to teach or rule in the church; an elder must be able to teach, and rule, or direct their people. Pastors are elders, but not all elders are Pastors. Elders (PASTORS) that rule well, are worthy of double honour according to **1 Timothy 5:17**. This speaks of money. **Verse 18** tells us that the laborer is worthy of his hire.
2. **“Bishop”** which comes from the Greek word Episkopos which means **overseer**, which emphasizes the fact the leadership is charged with overseeing the “local church” and as such is responsible for the spiritual well-being of the church; They are not to be a novice, for pride will come if they are put into a position where they can get puffed up. Many churches call their Pastors “Bishop”. They are synonymous. See the qualifications that are in **1 Timothy 3:1-7**.
3. **“Pastor”**, which comes from the Greek word poimen which means shepherd, which places emphasis upon the responsibility of those in leadership to do for the sheep what they cannot do for themselves. This office is charged with the responsibility of the leadership of the church to shepherd the flock. No shepherd has ever given birth to his sheep. It is the responsibility of those in leadership to do for the sheep what they cannot do for themselves and to make sure that they are in good spiritual condition so that they can do what comes naturally, and that is to beget other sheep. Pastors are to feed the flock of God (**1 Peter 5:2-3**) taking the oversight without constraint or force, but willingly. They do not Pastor for money, but they are worthy of double honor. They are to be financially supported by the sheep that are in their flock, and they are to be of a ready mind. They are to lead the sheep just as a shepherd would do. A Pastor will also be a teacher, instructing the sheep in the ways of God.

Pastors are to make sure that the sheep are in good spiritual condition so that they can do what comes naturally, that is, beget other sheep; A pastor is a sheep, but also a shepherd. Jesus is our chief Shepherd, or Pastor. A Pastor looks out for the sheep to make sure that sheep in wolves clothing do not hurt those in his flock.

4. **“Deacon”**, which comes from the Greek word *diakonos* – to minister, which places emphasis upon being a servant. They are to minister to or serve those whom the Lord has put under their care. Deacons are appointed by the people in the Church, according to **Acts 6**. They must be of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom. It states in **I Timothy 3:8** that they are not be two-faced, or double-tongued, they are to be grave, or serious minded, not after filthy lucre, or money. They must first be proved, or tested, to be found blameless. Deacons are not the same as bishops. Some churches have deacons that are put in positions of leadership or ruler ship, but this is not Biblical. Deacons are to be workers, and servants. They can become an Elder in time, but deacons are not to be “rulers”. They come under submission of the Pastor, not the other way around. Deacons are to be in spiritual harmony with the Pastors/Elders and seek to assist them in implementing the goals that the Pastors/Elders feel the Spirit of God is leading them to pursue through the local church.

Fivefold Ministry - Not every church practices the five-fold ministry, which encompasses Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Many churches believe that the offices of apostles, and prophets ceased after the Bible was written, but according to **Ephesians 4: 11-13** this cannot be true. We have not all come into unity as of this time. If that were so, the church universally would be in harmony and working together. Spirit of Life Ministries has tried to accomplish unity through the Highlands for Jesus, and other meetings to bring this about. Many times, it is like trying to mix water and oil. Unfortunately, the delay of unity delays our Lord’s return.

Apostle comes from the Greek work *apostolos* which means a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders. There are the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, which never will have any additional apostles added to them.

Then there are apostles of the early church, such as Paul, and others. **II Corinthians 12:12** says *“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”* These are some of the things that qualify a person as an Apostle. Missionaries are apostles, but most churches do not call them that. An Apostle is a church planter. He starts churches, then turns them over to others to carry on the work. He keeps in touch with those he started as the Apostle Paul did. They look to this person as the “Father” figure, or “Mother” figure.

PROPHET - Definition: In Greek writings, an interpreter of oracles or of other hidden things and/or one who, moved by the Spirit of God and hence his spokesman, solemnly declares to men what he has received by inspiration, especially concerning future events, and in particular such as relate to the cause and kingdom of God and to human salvation.

Prophets were in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Prophets are still in the Church today, although many “churches” believe that this gift ended when the Bible was finished. **1 Corinthians 14:3** says that prophecy is given for edification, exhortation, and comfort. **Verse 4** says it edifies the church. **14:29** says that prophets should speak two or three and let the other judge. **Verse 32** says the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. **Verse 39** says covet to prophesy, which means to desire to prophesy. **Verse 40** says all things are to be done decently and in order.

- A. John the Baptist was a prophet (**Luke 7:28**)
- B. Agabus was a prophet (**Acts 11:27-30**)
- C. Judas (not Iscariot) and Silas (**Acts 15:32-33**)
- D. Anna was a Prophetess (**Luke 2:36**)
- E. Philip’s daughters prophesied (**Acts 21:8-9**)

THE EVANGELIST

Evangelist means: **a bringer of good tidings**, an evangelist. This word is only used three times in the Bible - Twice as evangelist, and once as Evangelists. Philip was a deacon in Acts and became an Evangelist in **Acts 21:8**. When we give out the good news of Jesus Christ, we are evangelizing. There is an office of the Evangelist, which is a person called to do this as a “call”, rather than the ordinary giving out of good news. This person will have an anointing on them that when they bring forth the word souls are won into the kingdom.

TEACHER

Teacher means to learn, teach, exercise in. It comes from the Greek:

- A. (Qal) to learn
- B. (Piel) to teach
- C. (Pual) to be taught, be trained

Training or teaching is an anointed gift from God. Many people call themselves teachers, but there is no anointing. A Pastor must also be a teacher.

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They go hand in hand. Without solid Bible-based teaching the sheep will be subject to many heresies. The Word of God, the Bible is the foundation for all teaching – not man’s philosophies, or own ideas. Strong Bible based teaching is a true gift to any Church.

There must be an anointing for any of these positions of leadership. Without an anointing, an individual is just a church member. The anointing destroys the yoke and removes burdens.

ITS WORSHIP AND WORK

Matthew 28:16-17 *“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17) And when they saw him, they worshiped him: but some doubted.”*

THE CHURCH, ITS WORSHIP

“When they saw Him, they worshiped Him.” To worship is to bow down in awe and reverence: to pay divine honors to God in humble, reverent homage. There are three important essentials in worship. They are:

1. **Faith**, *“the people believed...then they bowed their heads and worshiped”* (Ex. 4:31)
2. **Spirit**, *“they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:23-24) Spiritual worship is worship directed by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Phil 3:3)
3. **Truth**, *“they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.”* Jesus Christ is truth (John 14:6). Therefore, there can be no pretense of hypocrisy in true worship. The parable of the Pharisee and the publican illustrates true and false worship (Luke 18:9-14). The publican worshiped in truth, and he went home justified. The Pharisee worshiped in religious pride, and he went home rejected.

THE CHURCH: ITS’ WORK

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord” (I Thess. 1:7-8). The church in Thessalonica did the work of the Lord so well that the apostles did not have to

evangelize Macedonia and Achaia. The church shared its' faith with the lost, and ***after all that is the main work of the church.***

This is how that, ***“by the space of two years”*** ...all which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, both Jews and Greeks (**Acts 19:8-10**) All of Asia did not journey to Ephesus to hear Paul. It is evident that the believers went everywhere sharing the gospel.

The work of the church is to: go with the gospel, because:

- The church is commissioned to work (**Matthew 28:18-20**)
- The church is to work with Christ (**2 Cor. 6:1**), and the Holy Spirit (**Acts 5:32**)
- The church is to work with Christ in His field (the world) (**Matt. 13:36-43**) and (**Mark 16:15**)
- The need for the church to work is great (**John 4:35**)
- The time for the church to work is now (**2 Cor. 6:2**)
- The church is to work until Jesus comes to judge the works of the saints (**2 Cor. 5:10**)
- The church will be rewarded for its' works (**1 Cor. 3:9-15**) God's program for the local church is COME AND WORSHIP AND GO AND WORK (witness) (**Acts 8:1-4**).

THE CHURCH – ITS' POWER

On the day of Pentecost, the church received power to evangelize the world. When the hundred and twenty came down from the Upper Room, they came in the anointing that came with of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and they were filled to overflowing.

It was the same power that Jesus said they would be given in **Acts 1:8**. This same baptismal power caused Peter who was once denied Jesus to have no fear. He stood up and preached the gospel and over 3,000 people were saved and baptized into the body of Christ (**Acts 2:38**). Everyone was given the power to witness and following Pentecost they went house to house daily with no fear of repercussion and daily people were added to the Church. (**Acts 2:46-47**)

The real power of the Church is not found in:

1. Modern buildings or unique methods of preaching and teaching.
2. It's great wealth or how that wealth is used.
3. The Church's prominence or popularity. The Laodicean Church was the first bragging congregation (**Rev. 3:14-22**) but not the last.
 - A. They said they were rich. God said they were poor.
 - B. They said we are wealthy. God said they were wretched.
 - C. They said we do not need anything. God said they needed everything.
 - D. They said we are busy in the church. God said they were miserable.
 - E. They said we have a vision. God said they were blind.
 - F. They said we are clothed in fine garments. God said they were naked.
 - G. They said we are satisfied. God said they made Him sick.

You can always recognize a Holy Spirit empowered church. The evidence is obvious, they have power to:

1. **Evangelize:** they share their faith with the lost and souls are saved. Evangelism is the only way to make full proof of your ministry (**2 Tim. 4:5**). When a church is not involved in winning souls it grieves the Holy Spirit and is void of power.
2. **Reproduce:** souls are born into the family of God by the "incorruptible seed" which is the word of God (**1 Peter 1:23**). The spirit filled believer sows the seed, this is evangelism, the Holy Spirit hovers over the seed, convicting, converting, and leading the lost to repentance. This is the spiritual birth.
3. **Change people;** (**Acts 2:37-41**) places, (**Acts 5:28**); and things (**Matt. 17:20-21**).

4. **Turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6)**. This is the power that baptized the 120 with the Holy Ghost and fire and filled the Upper Room congregation on the day of Pentecost. That power is with the believer today in the person of the Holy Spirit. He is the power of the church. If you aren't seeing the Holy Spirit move in power in your church, then it is nothing more than a social club.

THE CHURCH ITS FUTURE

The true church of Jesus Christ has a glorious, victorious future in the world, in the air, in the kingdom and in eternity.

IT CANNOT FAIL!!!!!! The gates of hell shall not prevail against it (**Matt. 16:18**).

The future of the church in the world.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit set the course for the church as it journeys from the Upper Room to the catching away of the saints, either at pre, mid or post tribulation, depending upon your viewpoint of when the catching away, or rapture, takes place.

1. The church will:

- A. Wage war (**Ephesians 6:10-18**)
- B. Run a race (**Hebrews 12:1,2**)
- C. Labor in love (**I Cor. 3:9**)

The church of Jesus Christ will emerge triumphant, for we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us (**Romans 8:35-39**). The church cannot fail because Christ is its head, the Holy Spirit is its power, and the Word of God is its guide.

2. The future of the church in the air.

- A. We shall be caught up (**I Thessalonians 4:15-18**)
- B. We shall have incorruptible, glorified bodies (**I Cor. 15:42-44**)

C. We will meet the Lord in the heavens, and for the great majority of the church, we will see Him in His resurrected body for the first time (**John 3:2**).

D. Our works may be judged at the judgment seat of Christ (**II Cor. 5:10**). This is the bema judgment.

E. We then will be rewarded or suffer loss of reward (**I Cor. 3:11-15**)

3. The future of the church in the kingdom

A. The twelve apostles of the lamb will sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel (**Matt. 19:28**)

B. All who overcome the evils of Christendom (Laodicea church) will sit with Christ on His Kingdom Throne (**Rev. 3:21**)

C. We shall reign with Jesus Christ for a thousand years (**Rev. 20:4-6**)

4. The future of the church in Eternity.

After the Kingdom reign of one thousand years there will be a new heaven and a new earth (**Rev. 21:1**). The earth will be restored to its original created state (**Genesis 1:1**). God's earthly people Israel will inherit the new earth (**Exodus 32:13**).

The church, the bride of Christ, will remain in His presence forever. If in His human form He is in the new heaven, or the new earth, we will be with Him, to see Him, to serve and worship Him. He will continue to bestow upon His bride the riches of His eternal grace (**Ephesians 2:6-7**). Even in our perfect, glorified bodies, it will take eternity (time without end) to begin to comprehend the greatness of His grace.

All of the offices of the church have one purpose, and that is to bring the body of Christ, the church, into unity. The Pastor, Teacher, Apostle, Evangelist, Prophet, Deacon, Elder, Bishop and any other person in leadership must work together to bring God-given results. They are not in leadership to be seen. They are there at God's direction and must follow his leadership through the local Pastor. Pray for these leaders, for they have a great responsibility!

