

A STUDY OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT
CHURCH

By Frank Jamerson

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Lesson 1

The Nature of the Church

The church is called by several figurative expressions which indicate its nature.

I. Kingdom - as to government.

A. Designations:

1. Kingdom of heaven (Matthew 3:2).
2. Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33; Mark 9:1).
3. Kingdom of Christ (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 1:9).
4. Kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13).

B. Christ is king (Acts 17:7; 2:29-31; Revelation 3:21).

1. Monarchy - no voting, all powers in one man.
2. Democracy - "Government by the people...exercised either directly (absolute, or pure democracy), or indirectly (representative democracy) through a system of representation" (Webster).

C. The kingdom is spiritual - not earthly.

1. Not of this world (John 18:36).
2. Entered by spiritual birth (John 3:3-5).
3. Is within man (Luke 17:21).

II. Body - as to organization.

A. Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22, 23).

B. All who are in Christ are in the one body (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4, 5).

C. Compared to physical body (1 Corinthians 12:12-25).

III. House of God - as to family.

A. God is the Father (Ephesians 4:6; Matthew 6:9; 23:9).

B. Christ is the elder brother (Romans 8:17).

C. The saved are in the family (1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6).

IV. Temple of God - as to worship.

A. In the Old Testament, it was a physical building (1 Kings 6:1-14).

B. In the New Testament, it is composed of human beings (1 Corinthians 3:9, 16, 17; 1 Peter 2:5).

His kingdom, His people

- C. Each Christian is a priest and presents himself as “a living sacrifice” to God (Romans 12:1, 2).
- V. A Vineyard - as to work.
- A. A vineyard is a place of labor, not retirement.
 - B. Those in the vineyard are to work (Matthew 20:1-16).
 - C. It is the Lord’s vineyard (Matthew 21:28-31).
 - D. If we do not produce fruit, we will be cast away (John 15:1-6).
- VI. Church - in relationship to the world.
- A. The Greek word translated church or assembly is ekklesia - called out.
 - B. It is used of the Israelites in the wilderness (Acts 7:38), a mob (Acts 19:32), and a governmental body (Acts 19:39).
 - C. It is generally used of those called out of the world through the Gospel of Christ. (We will study the uses of this word in the next lesson.)

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What does the word kingdom suggest about the nature of the church?
2. To what three things does kingdom relate God’s people?
3. When did Christ’s reign as king begin?
4. Contrast Christ’s kingdom with human kingdoms.
5. Of what is Christ the head?

His body, His bride

6. How do we enter the one body?

7. What does God expect of each member of the body?

8. As a family, what is our relationship to God and to Christ?

9. What is the house of God?

10. Is the church a physical building?

11. What does the figure of a temple suggest to you?

12. What do you think is the point of Jesus' parable in Matthew 20?

13. What are some of the fruit that we must bear for Christ?

14. What does "ekklesia" mean?

15. What does it imply about our lives?