

CHURCH The community of baptized believers in Jesus Christ, founded by Christ himself and still ruled by Christ as King. Also any local part of that community: a local congregation or group of congregations that share the same faith as the universal Church.

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I. NAMES OF THE CHURCH

The English word "church" is ultimately derived from the Greek *kyriakon* ("belonging to the Lord"); the Scots and northern English form "kirk" shows the derivation more clearly. The Greek term used in Scripture, however, is *ekklēsia* ("assembly"). In classical Greek, *ekklēsia* meant a civic assembly, but the word was used in the **Septuagint** for the religious assembly of the Israelites (cf. Deut 23:2-3; 1 Kgs 8:5, 14, 22; Ps 22:26).

Ekklēsia is used extensively in the New Testament, including over sixty times in the Pauline writings. The word is used in much the same way we use the English word "church": it can mean the whole Church ("on this rock

I will build my church," Matt 16:18) or a local part of it ("the seven churches that are in Asia," Rev 1:4). Since the earliest Christians had not yet put up buildings for their assemblies, however, the word never refers to a building but always to an assembly of people.

II. THE CHURCH AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. Salvation History Prepares for the Church

Salvation history in the OT is a record of how God prepared the world for his Church. In a series of covenants (see **Covenant**), the scope of God's covenant widened from a couple to a household, a tribe, a nation, a kingdom, and finally a worldwide Church. In the Church, the promise God made to **Abraham** is fulfilled: "by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (Gen 12:3).

B. Israel, a Type of the Church

Israel, God's covenant people, was a **type** of the universal Church. Israel professed the same creed, worshipped by the same cult, and lived by the same commandments. This union of the twelve tribes into a single family of faith prefigured the union of all nations in the belief that Jesus Christ is Lord. Through the covenant with **Moses**, Israel was bound to live by God's Law and made the custodian of the worship of the True God. The sacrifices (see **Sacrifice**) offered under the Law prefigured the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross (Heb 9:22-28), which is present to us in the **Eucharist**, the covenant meal of the Church.

C. *The Promised Restoration of the Kingdom*

The covenant with **David** promised an everlasting kingdom to the son of David (1 Sam 7:13), with "the ends of the earth" as its boundary (Ps 2:8). David left a small empire with several tributary nations to his son Solomon, but after Solomon the empire broke up, and the long-lasting Davidic dynasty in **Judah** came to an end with the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem.

In spite of the violent end of the Davidic kingship in Israel, prophets promised a restored kingdom far more glorious than the original: "nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isa 60:3). There would be a time when the covenant would expand to include all the nations, not just Israel: "And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people" (Zech 2:11).

III. THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. *The Founding of the Christian Church*

This promise of the restored Davidic empire was fulfilled with the coming of the Son of David, Jesus Christ, who reigns as king with the Church as the earthly and historical manifestation of his kingdom. Christ's throne is established forever in heaven, and "the ends of the earth" are indeed the kingdom's boundaries. Thus the chief message of the apostles at the beginning of the Church was that the kingdom had been restored (Acts 1:6; 2:30-31; 8:12; 19:8; 28:23). Through **baptism**, anyone who

believes can now enter the kingdom (John 3:5; Acts 2:38).

Christ himself proclaimed that the "kingdom" was at hand (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15), and he often used the phrase "**Kingdom of God**" or "kingdom of heaven" to describe his Church (see, for example, Mark 4:26; 4:30; 10:15). His words were taken at first by his contemporaries, including the apostles, to be a promise of the restored kingdom of David that would bring an end to the Roman occupation. But Jesus insisted that "My kingship is not of this world" (John 18:36). He had come to establish a greater kingdom than the Roman Empire, a kingdom that would span the world and last to the end of time. His kingdom touches down in history, but its authority comes from heaven.

The Holy Spirit—the soul of the living body of believers united in Christ—was given by Jesus to the Church at Pentecost (Acts 1:2; 2:23). With the coming of the Spirit, the apostles began to preach and to baptize and so to enlarge the membership of the Church (Acts 2:4-41; 4:2).

B. *The Structure of the New Testament Church*

Jesus gave his kingdom a structure and authority (Matt 16:16-18, 18:15-18; Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1-2). He chose twelve apostles, with Peter as their leader (Matt 16:18; John 21:15-17), to provide a firm foundation for this Church and to represent the twelve tribes of Israel (Eph 2:20; Rev 21:12-14). This kingdom, founded upon Peter, will endure even the attacks of Satan. Thus the Church had a hierarchy from the beginning, in which the apostles were placed over the laity (1 Thess 5:12). Some are shep-

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herds, some sheep (John 21:15–17; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1–2) (CCC 553, 642, 771, 874–87, 894–95).

The apostles, in turn, chose successors for themselves (Acts 1:15–26) and appointed other ministers to help spread the message and to tend to the affairs of the growing Church (Acts 6:1–3).

Already in the time of the apostles we see a hierarchy of **deacon**, presbyter (or **priest**), and **bishop** (Acts 14:23; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Pet 5:1; “presbyters” is translated “elders” in the RSV). The difference between a bishop and a priest may not have been sharply defined yet, but the basic organization of the Church was already established in the generation that had known Jesus on earth.

C. *The Body of Christ*

Paul provides an expansive theological explanation of the Church, using the word *ekklēsia* some sixty-five times. For Paul, the Church is the body of Christ, who is its head (Col 1:18; Eph 5:22–24, 29–30) and from whom the Church receives her fullness (Eph 1:22–23; Col 1:18). The members of the body have different functions, as a hand differs from a foot or an eye; but they all belong to the same body, and each has its particular function (Rom 12:4–8; 1 Cor 12:4–26; cf. 1 Cor 12:27–31; Eph 4:11–14).

The Church as the body of Christ also gives Paul the means to stress the unity among all believers (1 Cor 12:12; Rom 12:4). This unity finds its sacramental reality first in baptism (1 Cor 12:13), then in the Eucharist: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body” (1 Cor 10:17).

D. *The Bride of Christ*

The Church is also the Bride of Christ (2 Cor 11:2–3; Eph 5:22–33; Rev 19:7–8). Christ loves his bride as a husband loves his wife: “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25–27). This relationship between Christ and the Church is a mystery (Eph 5:22–32), but it develops from the OT’s imagery of Yahweh as the divine husband of Israel (Hos 2:2, 14–23; Jer 2:2), and it is also consistent with Jesus’s reference to himself as a bridegroom (Matt 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34).

E. *The Living Temple*

For Paul, the Church is also a living temple, indwelt by the Spirit (1 Cor 3:16–17; Eph 2:19–22; cf. Matt 16:18). Christ himself is the cornerstone, the “living stone” that was rejected by the builders (1 Pet 2:4), and all Christians, like living stones, are built on that foundation into “a spiritual house” where the true sacrifices are offered (1 Pet 2:5). The Holy Spirit makes the Church one united people (Gal 3:24–29), the children of God (Eph 4:1–6), who are equal members of the kingdom and who are reconciled through the love of Jesus Christ (Eph 2:11–22; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11).

F. *The Church Perfected in Glory*

Finally, the Church is the bearer of divine life and eschatological hope. The progress of the Church in the world will culminate on the day

CHUZA

when Jesus Christ returns, when the Church will be perfected in the glory of heaven. Until then, the Church continues her pilgrimage in the face of persecutions, living in confident expectation of the full coming of the Kingdom, when "all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Cor 5:10).

G. *The Marks of the Church*

The Nicene Creed calls the Church *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic*, and these four distinctive marks define the Church and distinguish it as the guardian of true faith:

One, because its members are united in faith and doctrine, under the pope;

Holy, because it offers the means of receiving sanctifying grace and because it was founded by Christ and is animated by the Holy Spirit;

Catholic, because it is universal, meaning that its blessings are intended for all peoples of the world;

Apostolic, because the leadership of the Church goes back in an unbroken line through the bishops to the apostles, who were appointed by Christ (CCC 811-65).

CHUZA A steward of **Herod Antipas**. His wife, Joanna, was a financial supporter and follower of Jesus (Luke 8:3). He might be the same royal official whose son was healed by Jesus (John 4:46-53). The name Chuza is preserved in both Nabatean and Syrian inscriptions.

CILICIA A Roman province in southeastern Asia Minor, to the south of the Taurus Mountains and west of Mount Amanus. It was known for its fertile plains. The region once belonged to the Hittites, and before Roman times it was part of the Seleucid (1 Macc 11:14; 2 Macc 4:36) Empire. Paul was born in Cilicia's chief city, Tarsus (Acts 21:39; 22:3; 23:34); he spent some time there after his conversion to Christianity (Acts 9:30) and was active in evangelizing his native country (Gal 1:21-23; cf. Acts 15:23, 40-41; 18:23).

CINNAMON A spice that was harvested in Ceylon, India, and the East Indies. It was an expensive luxury item in the biblical period. Cinnamon was used in food and the preparation of holy oils (Exod 30:23); it was also used as a perfume (Prov 7:17; Song 4:14).

CIRCUMCISION The rite of cutting away the foreskin from the male generative organ, performed on Jewish boys on their eighth day of life. In Israel, circumcision was not just a surgical procedure; it was primarily a religious rite. It was a sign of God's **covenant** with **Abraham** (Gen 17:10), and no man could belong to God's covenant people without being circumcised (Gen 17:14).

I. *Circumcision in the Old Testament*

A. *A Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant*

B. *A Rite of Initiation into the Worship Life of Israel*

C. *An Outward Sign of Inward Faith*

II. *Circumcision in the New Testament*

A. *Must Christians Be Circumcised?*

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I. CIRCUMCISION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. A Sign of the Covenant

Circumcision was a sign of the covenant between God and Israel. It was performed on Jewish boys on their eighth day of life. It was a religious rite, not just a surgical procedure. It was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:10), and no man could belong to God's covenant people without being circumcised (Gen 17:14).

For Israel, circumcision was not a rite of initiation into the worship life of Israel, which entry into the covenant community was granted to all who were born into the community. It was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:10), and no man could belong to God's covenant people without being circumcised (Gen 17:14).

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The term "circumcision" refers to any violation