

PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

THE DIVINE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CHURCH

- To help understand the purpose of the church, Scripture uses a wide range of metaphors and images to describe what the church is like
- It has been estimated that there are at least 80 different metaphors and images used to refer to the church in the NT
- Such a variety of images say much about our subjective relationship with Christ and guard against magnifying one aspect of the church over another

The Shepherd and the Sheep

- The metaphor of shepherd and flock is frequently used in the OT and it pictures God as the shepherd who loves and tenderly cares for His sheep (Psalm 23; Ezek 34)

Psalm 11:3 ~ We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture

- In similar fashion, the NT depicts the church as being composed of sheep from both Israel and Gentiles who are lovingly led and cared for by Christ, the Chief Shepherd

John 10:1-18

- Jesus calls the sheep and leads them (vs. 3-4)
- Jesus is the door through which the sheep enter (vs. 9)
- Jesus is the shepherd who lays his life down for the sheep (vs. 11, 15)...He purchased the flock with his own blood
- Jesus has a close relationship with his sheep (vs. 14)...He knows those who are His and provides every need for them...as shepherd He guards the sheep from danger, tends the sick, searches for the lost, and leads them to good pasture...the relationship of shepherd to sheep was one of considerable intimacy
- All of this serves to show the value which God has placed upon the flock and the fact that He has absolute right of ownership over it
- Christ has also committed the work of shepherding to undershepherds as His ministers in the church

Acts 20:28 ~ Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

1 Peter 5:2 ~ shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

Ephesians 4:11 ~ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

- There is not better description of the work of the leaders of the church than undershepherds of the chief Shepherd whose ministry is to care for each member as a shepherd cares for his sheep
- This involves feeding them the Word (2 Tim 4:2), ruling the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2), protecting them (Acts 20:29-30), and keeping watch over their souls (Heb 13:17)

The Vine and the Branches

- The OT provides the background for the figure of the vine and the branches in that Israel was often symbolized by a vine which God had planted (Isaiah 5)

John 15:1-7

- Jesus is the vine; believers are the branches (vs. 5)
- The key to bearing fruit is that the branch abides in the vine – thus, believers are to abide in Christ (vs. 4-5)...the branch must remain in the vine, in order that the vitality of that vine might bring forth fruit through it...this is necessary because there is no life in the branch of itself and consequently no prospect of fruit outside of abiding in the vine
- Abiding in Christ = vital fellowship that results in fruit and service
- The same life is in the branches as is in the vine – the branches bear fruit because of their vital connection to the life-giving vine
- Fruit = any manifestation of Christ in and through the believer
- Although fruit bearing depends on this mutual relationship, the power for producing fruit flows only one way...from the vine to the branches...thus, believers are only fruitful as Christ lives in them
- At times, this involves pruning to make the vine more effective (vs. 2)
- This results in God being glorified (vs. 8)
- Thus, the figure of the vine demonstrates the vital relationship between members of the church and Christ...abiding in Him means life and fruitfulness; apart from Him there is worthlessness and death

A Temple

Ephesians 2:19-22 ~ *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

- Israel had a temple; whereas, the church is a temple;
- The church is built on the “cornerstone” who is Christ Jesus

1 Peter 2:6 ~ *For this is contained in Scripture: “Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.”*

Ephesians 2:20 ~ *having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,*

- The church is also built on the “foundation” who is Christ Jesus

1 Cor 3:10-11 ~ *According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

- But there is a sense in which the apostles and prophets are also in a certain respect foundational

Ephesians 2:20 ~ *having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,*

- This temple is not built with literal stones but with people who are “living stones”

1 Peter 2:5 ~ *you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

- God now dwells in His NT temple to perform the same functions He did in the OT temple
- The body of each member of the church, as well as the church collectively, is a temple (1 Cor 3:16-17; 1 Cor 6:19; Eph 2:21-22)

71. The Church's Foundation

View One	View Two	View Three
<p>"The Rock" = Peter</p> <p>Held by Tertullian, Cyprian, Vatican 1 & 11</p> <p>Arguments for:</p> <p>Christ was speaking to Peter when he spoke of the rock.</p> <p><i>Petros</i> (Peter) means a small rock.</p> <p>According to Roman Catholicism, Peter was the first pope.</p> <p>Arguments against:</p> <p>A distinction is made between <i>petros</i> (a small rock) and <i>petra</i> (a big rock).</p> <p>Peter calls Christ the foundation (1 Peter 1:4-8).</p> <p>Peter never claimed to be the pope.</p> <p>1 Corinthians 3:11 makes it impossible for Peter to be the foundation of the church.</p>	<p>"The Rock" = Christ</p> <p>Held by Augustine, Calvin, Zwingli</p> <p>Arguments for:</p> <p>Passages such as 1 Corinthians 3:11; 1 Peter 2:4-8</p> <p><i>Petra</i> is used metaphorically of Christ in the New Testament.</p> <p>Christ makes a distinction between <i>petros</i> and <i>petra</i>.</p> <p>Arguments against:</p> <p>Christ may not have spoken these exact words, since he spoke Aramaic.</p> <p>Christ never claims to be the rock.</p>	<p>"The Rock" = the confession of Peter</p> <p>Held by Chrysostom, Zahn</p> <p>Arguments for:</p> <p>Christ was pleased with Peter's confession (Matt. 16:16-18).</p> <p>Peter's confession is that on which the preaching office was established.</p> <p>Arguments against:</p> <p>Peter denied Christ's impending death (Matt. 16:22-23).</p> <p>The office of preaching was established long before Peter's confession.</p>

The Head and Body

- The apostle Paul's favorite description of the church is the metaphor of the head and the body

Ephesians 1:22-23 ~ *And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

Ephesians 4:15-16 ~ *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

Colossians 1:18 ~ *He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.*

- Christ is the head; believers are the body
- The church is more than a unified body...it is the body of a Person
- The unity of the members is based not on a mutual relationship within the group but in their vital relationship to the Head of the body, Christ Himself
- As Head of the church, Christ exercises His lordship over the church
- As Head of the church, Christ also is the source of its vitality

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- There is a unity of the body – as the body is composed of many members and yet is one, so also is the church
- All of the gifted members are under the same Head and are part of the same body

1 Cor 12:4-6 ~ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*.

- There is a diversity of the body – it is composed of diverse members, each of which is necessary to the body

1 Cor 12:14 ~ For the body is not one member, but many

1 Cor 12:17-20 ~ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body.

- There is a mutuality of the body – each member of the body of Christ is not only related to Christ the Head, but also to each other, each contributing to the overall functioning of the body

1 Cor 12:21-25 ~ And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those *members* of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need *of it*. But God has *so* composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another

The Bridegroom and the Bride

- One of the most beautiful images of the church is that of the bride of Christ

Ephesians 5:22-23 ~ *Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.*

Ephesians 5:32 ~ *This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.*

- Christ is the bridegroom...and as the groom He loves His bride deeply...the love of Christ for His bride far surpasses anything known in the human level
- Never has a husband loved as Christ loved the church
- Notice the 3 expressions of His love for the church:

Past – **Ephesians 5:25** ~ *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,*

Present – **Ephesians 5:26** ~ *so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,*

Future – **Ephesians 5:27** ~ *that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.*

- Although there was no initial love on the part of the bride, there is a response to His love
- The responsibility of the church to the bridegroom:

Subjection – **Ephesians 5:24** ~ *But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.*

Respect – **Ephesians 5:32-33** ~ *This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.*

- This image of the church as Christ's bride also speaks of a future day when the church will enter into the fullness of that position
- Now her position is hidden before the eyes of the world, even as the power and life of her bridegroom is hidden
- When He is manifest in glory then His bride will also be revealed for what she is and exalted to share in the glory of her spouse

Revelation 19:7-9 ~ Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

Family

Ephesians 2:19 ~ *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,*

1 Timothy 5:1-2 ~ *Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.*

2 Corinthians 6:18 ~ *"And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.*

Pillar and Support of the Truth

1 Timothy 3:15 ~ *but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*

74. Analogies of Christ and the Church

Christ	Church	Reference	Terminology
Head	Body	Colossians 1:18a	"And he is the head of the body, the church."
Cornerstone	Temple	Ephesians 2:20-21	". . . Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."
Beloved	Virgin	2 Corinthians 11:2	"I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him."
Bridegroom	Bride	Revelation 21:9	"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."
Ruler (implied)	City	Revelation 21:9-10	"He . . . showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."
Owner	People	Titus 2:14	". . . to purify for himself a people that are his very own."
Shepherd	Flock	1 Peter 5:2-4	"Be shepherds of God's flock And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown. . . ."
Firstborn	Household	Ephesians 2:19 Colossians 1:18b	". . . members of God's household." "He is the beginning and the firstborn."
Creator	New Man	Ephesians 2:15	"His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two."
Founder (implied)	Chosen People	1 Peter 2:9	"You are a chosen people . . . a holy nation, a people belonging to God."
High Priest	Royal Priesthood	Hebrews 4:14 1 Peter 2:9	"We have a great high priest . . . Jesus the Son of God." ". . . a royal priesthood. . . ."
Heir	Inheritance	Ephesians 1:18	". . . his glorious inheritance in the saints."

THE DIVINE DESIGN FOR THE CHURCH

- Three main duties of the church

Exalting God (Worship)

Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14 ~ *to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved...to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory...who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*

Ephesians 3:10 ~ *in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.*

Ephesians 3:21 ~ *To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.*

1 Peter 2:5 ~ *You also as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

- The main reason the church gathers is for corporate worship which involves a number of important components:

Singing

Colossians 3:16-17 ~ *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, singing to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your heart to the Lord.*

- Singing to God's praise was evidently a big thing in the apostolic church, as it has been in all movements of spiritual power ever since
- Paul and Barnabas, along with their praying (aloud), sang hymns in the prison in Philippi (Acts 16:25)
- And the New Testament contains a number of what appear to be hymn fragments (Eph. 5:14; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16; and others)
- The "new songs" of Revelation are both numerous and exuberant, indeed ecstatic (Rev. 4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 12-13; 7:10, 12; 11:15, 17-18; 12:10-12; 15:3-4; 19:1-8; 21:3-4).

Prayer

Acts 2:42 ~ *They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

Preaching

Acts 2:42 ~ *They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

2 Timothy 4:1-4 ~ *I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*

Communion

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 ~ *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in*

which He was betrayed took bread; 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." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

- God does not prescribe for Christian worship in the detailed fashion of Old Testament times
- But the New Testament shows clearly what the staple ingredients of corporate Christian worship are, namely, praise ("psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," Eph. 5:19), prayer, and preaching, with regular administration of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7-11)
- Any local church anywhere that is spiritually alive will undoubtedly take its singing, praying, and preaching very seriously indeed, and be jealous for all three

Equipping the Saints (Work)

Ephesians 4:12 ~ *For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.*

- The word "equipping" means literally "to put in order, restore, make complete, to prepare"
- This term was used in the Greek OT in Ezra in connection with the rebuilding of the wall and the temple after the Babylonian exile (Ezra 4:12, 16; 5:3, 9; 6:14)
- The wall had been destroyed and by enemies. Built up piece by piece – Equipped
- This term is found in the secular sense of repairing fishing nets

Matthew 4:21 ~ *And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the {son} of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them.*

- The term was used to refer to that which is fit, is restored to its original condition, or is made complete
- It was often used as a medical term for the setting of bones
- God's desire is that His people be prepared, trained, and made complete in Christ

Hebrews 13:20-21 ~ *Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, {even} Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will.*

- How does Christ equip us? What does He provide for our growth?
- God has given four basic tools for the spiritual equipping of the saints:
 1. Testing - James 1:2-4
 2. Suffering - 1 Peter 5:10
 3. His Word, the Bible - 2 Tim. 3:16-17
 4. Prayer - Acts 2:42; 6:4, Col. 4:12-13
- The last two agents of spiritual equipping—the Scriptures & prayer—fall with the tasks of gifted men
- It is lack of knowledge of God's Word and obedience to it - not lack of programs and methods that hinder God's people
- When they fail it is not because of weak programs, but weak teaching - weak equipping
- The primary role of the gifted men in Ephesians 4:11 is that they are to be equippers - those that use God's Word to prepare God's people.
- But what are God's people to be prepared for? ➔ ***for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ***
- It is not the gifted men who have the most responsibility to do the work of service. No pastor, or even a

group of pastors can do everything a church needs to do. God's purpose is that the pastors equip the people that God has given to their care.

- Obviously the leaders share in serving, and many of the congregation share in equipping, but God's basic design is for the equipping to be done so that the saints can serve each other effectively.
- When the gifted men are faithful in prayer and in teaching the Word, the people will be properly equipped and rightly motivated to do the work of service.
- Spiritual service is the work of every Christian, every saint of God. Attendance is a poor substitute for participation in ministry.
- What should this equipping result in? → *the building up of the body of Christ*
- The church body is built up externally through evangelism as more believers are added, but the emphasis here is on its being built up internally as all believers are nurtured to fruitful service through the Word.
- God's goal is that the individual believers grow in their spiritual depth. He will take care of the breadth.

Evangelizing the lost (Witness)

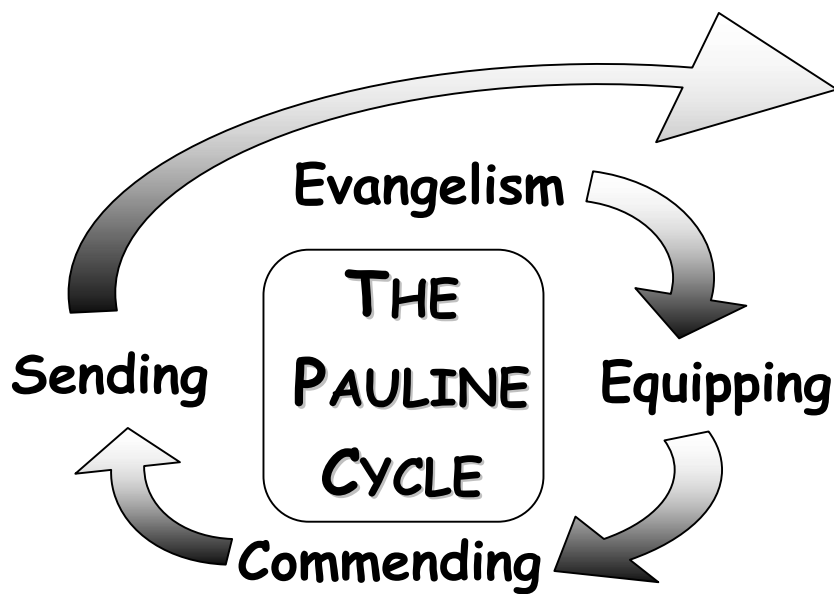
Matthew 28:19-20 ~ *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

Acts 1:8 ~ *but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

- This must be done locally

Colossians 4:2,3 ~ *Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;*

- This is not just done in an individualistic manner, but as a corporate body
- God has given each local church the responsibility to equip and motivate its people to aggressively reach out to those in their sphere of influence.
- Elders must model this...The church must program for this
- This also must be done globally (missions)
- Paul's cycle in Acts 13-14 serves as the model for a local church's global outreach strategy
 - *Sending: 13:1-5*
 - *Evangelizing: 13:5, 16-49; 14:3, 7,*
 - *Equipping: 14:21-22*
 - *Commending: 14:23*



- Both aspects of Evangelism must be present in a healthy church
- Exalting and Equipping occur in the gathered church, while Evangelism occurs in the scattered church