The Church
(What does God say it is?)
April 1, 2009

(Going to ‘church’ vs going to ‘the church.’)

The Word calls us:
Christian, the Way, the Church, Brethren, Body of Christ, Elect, Believers, Saints

**Christian**

*Acts 11:19-26* (Many believe and are added to the Lord, & assemble with ‘the church’)
19 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.
20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.
21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.
22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.
23 When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.
24 For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. (Not added to the church)
25 Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul.
26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

*1 Peter 4:16-17* (Peter uses the term ‘Christian’ in his writings)
16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.
17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

**The Way**

*Acts 9:1-2* (Paul hunts down ‘the Way’ before his conversion on Road to Damascus)
Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest
2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

*Acts 19:23* (Another reference to ‘the Way’)
And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.

*Acts 24:14* (Paul explains his association with ‘the Way’ to Governor Felix)
But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

The Church
Acts 12:1 (Luke writes, and the ‘some’ are people)
Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church.

Acts 13:1-3 (Paul and Barnabas sent out by ‘the church,’)
13:1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."
3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Acts 14:27 (Believers are ‘gathered together’)
Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Rom 16:3-5 (Reference here to the ‘groups of fellow workers, or believers)
3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
4 who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.
5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

The Brethren
Acts 15:3-4 (‘The church’ did not refer to leadership only)
3 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren.
4 And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.

Col 4:15 (‘The church’ called ‘the brethren’) (One and the same)
Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.

Body of Christ
1 Cor 12:12-14 (Christ is ‘the church’)
12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.
13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.
14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

Eph 1:22-23 (‘The church’ is His body, or the Body of Christ)
22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,
23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

**Eph 5:23** (Christ is head of ‘the church’ and Savior of the body.)
For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

**Col 1:24** (Paul reiterates, His body is ‘the church’)
I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

**The Elect**

**Matt 24:24** (Christians are called ‘the elect’)
For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

**Matt 24:31** (Christians also called ‘His elect’)
And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

**Luke 18:7** (God’s own elect)
And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?

**Col 3:12-13** (Paul refers to believers as ‘elect of God’)
12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;
13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

**1 Peter 5:13** (Peter refers to a group of believers as ‘she’ and as ‘elect’)
She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son.

**2 John 1-2** (John refers to a group of believers as the ‘elect lady’ and the individuals as her children’)
To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth,
2 because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

**2 John 12-13** (The individuals of your sister group)
12 Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.
13 The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.
Believers
Acts 5:12-15  (Luke refers to ‘the church’ as believers and says they are added to the Lord)
12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.
13 Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.
14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,
15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.

1 Tim 4:11-12  (Paul instructs Timothy to teach ‘believers’)
11 These things command and teach.
12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Saints
1 Cor 1:2  (Paul says the ‘church of God’ is called to be saints)
To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

Jude 3  (Jude verifies that salvation was ‘delivered to the saints’– that’s us)
Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

1 Cor 14:33  (Paul refers to ‘the church’ as saints)
33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Dan 7:18  (Daniel makes reference to ‘the saints of the Most High’ receiving the kingdom)
But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.'

Ps 16:3  (David writes, as Daniel did, even before the birth of Christ, of ‘the saints)
As for the saints who are on the earth,
"They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight."

Ps 89:5-7  (Again David, assembly of saints)
5 And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD;
Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the saints.
6 For who in the heavens can be compared to the LORD?
Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the LORD?
7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints,
And to be held in reverence by all those around Him.
Ps 97:10  (His saints)
You who love the LORD, hate evil!
He preserves the souls of His saints;
He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.

Ps 116:15 (Again)
Precious in the sight of the LORD
Is the death of His saints.

Prov 2:8  (Solomon refers to ‘His saints’)
He guards the paths of justice,
And preserves the way of His saints.

Acts 9:32  (Luke, who traveled with Paul, refers to believers, as saints)
Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda.

Rev 14:12  (Who are these saints of God? ...no matter what we’re called, this is our instruction)
12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Matt 27:50-53  (The reward of the saints was demonstrated even at Jesus’ resurrection)
50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.
51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,
52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;
53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Summary

‘The church’ is the body of believers who from the beginning of time have believed in our Lord, and are set to inherit eternal life at Jesus’ return.
It is all about ‘people’ and their relationship with Christ, not about organizations, nor buildings....