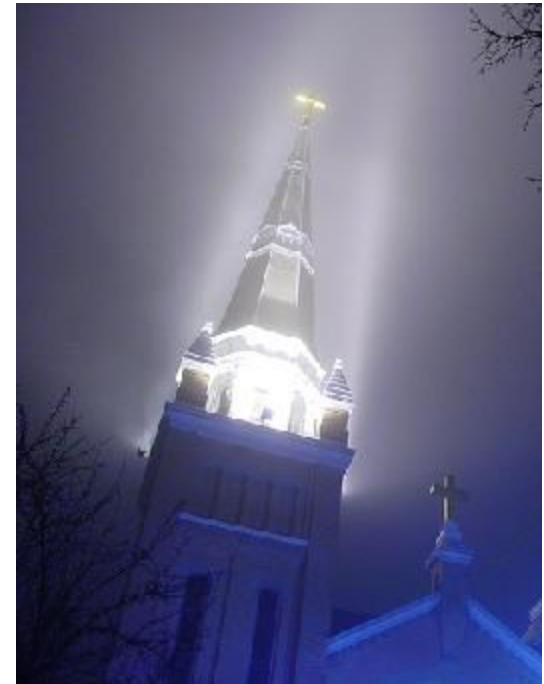


NEW TESTAMENT IMAGES OF THE CHURCH

A SMALL GROUP OR PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

by Rev. Bob Highlands III



**I will build my church, and the gates
of Hades will not overcome it.**

Jesus to Peter MATTHEW 16:18

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The church that Jesus promised to build has now passed two thousand years. She is found on every covenant, in every country of the world. Yet she appears so differently from one place to another. The question is what is the church, and why does she look so different in so many places? Why can't we agree on music, organization, structure, leadership? A better question may be what can we agree on. The purpose of this study is to see what the New Testament says about the church. The New Testament is full of images, or word pictures, that describe the church. Our goal is to see these images as a uniting force in the church that Jesus is building.

I am deeply grateful to the work of Paul S Minear in his book '*IMAGES OF THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT*.'¹ This groundbreaking book was published in 1960 as part of a global effort to understand and unite the church. I have used his outline headings and classifications in this study guide.

October 2004
Rev. Bob Highlands III

1. Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*. (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1960).

From the list above which one is the hardest for you ? Why?

Which "one another" would you like others to use when around you? Why?

Why do you think there are so many different churches if we are called to be one in Christ?

Can we be one in Christ and still be so very different? Why?

What should you do to help strengthen your local church? (or what should you change about yourself that would make your church a better church?)

for Christian believers? _____

5. Responsibilities ONE ANOTHER

Read the following verses and list the responsibilities
believer have to and for each other.

Romans 12:10 _____

Romans 12:16 _____

Romans 13:8 _____

Romans 14:13 _____

Romans 15:7 _____

Romans 15:14 _____

Romans 16:16 _____

1 Corinthians 1:10 _____

Galatians 5:13 _____

Ephesians 4:2 _____

Ephesians 4:32 _____

Ephesians 5:19 _____

Ephesians 5:21 _____

Hebrews 3:13 _____

Hebrews 10:24-25 _____

James 4:11 _____

1 Peter 4:9 _____

1 John 1:7 _____

Some additional verses: Colossians 3:13, 16, 1 Thessalonians
5:11, Titus 3:3, 1 Peter 1:22, 3:8, 5:5, 5:14, 1 John 3:11,
3:23, 4:7, 4:11-12, 2 John 1:5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Minor Images of The Church

Within the New Testament are wonderful word images that point us toward a way of seeing ourselves as God sees us. These images are put here for our benefit. There is no way to describe the church in one phrase. The closest comes when Jesus has a conversation with Peter.

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

¹⁷Jesus replied, *"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

Matthew 16:15-19

The word Jesus uses to describe the church is ecclesia. It comes from two words 'from out of' and 'to call.' Joined together the words mean those who are "called out," or the church. We are called out of the world to be the church. The images of the new testament are vivid and rich that refer to the church. Let us start our study with some minor images of the church. These may not appear as often, or be thought of always as pictures of the church but they will help us see ourselves more clearly. The minor images that refer to those who are called out are a wonderful picture that have been given to us so we may better be the CHURCH.

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. Jesus in Matthew 5:13

1. Why do you think Jesus calls us Salt? _____

2. What are some common uses for Salt? _____

3. How can we lose our saltiness? _____

4. Read 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 What image is used to describe the believer here? _____
This is the only place where this image is use to describe believers in the church. Fill in the following chart.
 - a. The sender is _____
 - b. Who delivers it? _____
 - c. Who is the ink? _____
 - d. Where are the words written? _____

 - e. Who is to read this message? _____

 - f. How does this image apply to you? _____

5. Read Matthew 4:19 What image is used to describe the work of believers? _____

Why do you think Jesus used this image when talking to the disciples? _____

4. Read Colossians 3:15-16 What does it mean to have Christ rule in your hearts? _____

It is important to remember the word here is hearts and is plural. Why is this important? _____

What are we suppose to do together? explain each

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
- f. _____
- g. _____
- h. _____
- i. _____
- j. _____

Note in the Greek the words have different meaning from the words we use today.

Psalms = Musical notes or songs with musical instruments

Hymns = Vocal praise, often spontaneous, and without instruments in many cases. see Matthew 26:30 & Mark 14:26

Spiritual Songs = This is the least clear of the three, and is most likely not a hymn or psalm but a special 'Christian poem, or sacred poem.

The words as used in the New Testament can be used interchangeably and show not the style of singing as the need to share the experience with other believers.

5. Read John 17:20-22 What does Jesus want for all believers? _____ According to Jesus, How is this to take place? _____

6. Read John 13:34-35 What is the new command Jesus gave to his disciples? _____

Compare this with Deuteronomy 19:21 Why is this different

Images of The Church as ONE Church

You are called to the unity of faith as the church.

The church can be seen as those who are one with God.

"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought."

1 Corinthians 1:10

1. Why should we agree with one another? _____

2. Read Ephesians 4:2-8 List all the ones in these verses.

Why are there so many ones in these verses? _____

What does the word unity imply? _____

How does this make us the same? _____

How does this allow us to be different? _____

3. Read Ephesians 4:32 What three attitudes are we called on to demonstrate toward other member of the church?

_____ see also Col. 3:13-14

Why should we do this? _____

6. Read Matthew 13:47-50 What image is presented here to represent the church? _____

What other images are here? What do you think they represent?

7. Read 1 Peter 3:20 & 2 Peter 2:5 The image here is of the flood that destroyed the whole world. God has promised not to destroy the world again until the end of time. What in the story of Noah could represent the church?

Why? _____

8. Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 The believers are compared to bread in this word picture. What is different about this bread? _____

What does the old represent? _____

What does the new represent? _____

What does this teach us about the church? _____

9. Read John 15:1-8 This analogy is important in the life of the church. It has several parallel meanings laid one on top of the other. Take a few moments and answer as many of these questions as you can.

a. What is the individual believer compared to in this analogy?

b. What is the believer responsible to do? _____

c. What does this mean? _____

d. The vine can have two meanings in the analogy, what are they? (one is not as obvious as the other)

It can represent _____

It can represent _____

e. What promises are given to us here? _____

f. What do we have to do to receive these promises?

10. Read Mark 12:1-9 This is a parable of Jesus, or a story with a lesson to be learned. Answer the following questions from this parable. What do the following represent in the parable?

a. The man who planted the vineyard? _____

b. The farmers he rented to? _____

c. The son? _____

d. The new tenants? _____

What is the responsibility of the new tenants? _____

How does this parable show us the purpose of the church? _____

11. Read the following verses and list how the image that is given to the church by the New Testament writer.

a. 1 Corinthians 3:9 _____

b. 1 Timothy 3:15 _____

c. Matthew 25:1-13 _____

d. Revelation 21:2 _____

e. Matthew 22:1-10 _____

f. Revelation 19:7 _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Why is it important for the members of the church to see themselves as the body of Christ?

What is the responsibility of each member of the body of Christ to the other members?

Why are the members of the church so different from each other?

What are your gifts or abilities that can be used as part of the body of Christ?

10. Read Ephesians 5:29-30 How does this picture us and out earthly bodies? _____

How does Christ take care of the Church? _____

11. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and answer the following questions.

How many bodies are there? _____

How many parts are there? _____

When you are baptized what happens? _____

Are there any exceptions to who can be joined in- to the body of Christ? _____

Are all the parts of the body the same? _____

Why? _____

Can we reject the parts of the body of Christ that are different? _____ Why? _____

Verse 27 Who is included in the body of Christ? _____

Can anyone be in the body of Christ alone? _____

Why is this true? _____

Why do we need so many different members? _____

g. Ephesians 2:19 _____

h. 1 Peter 2:11 _____

i. 2 Corinthians 5:20 _____

Discussion Questions:

Which one of these images mean the most to you? Why?

Were any of these word pictures about the church new to you? Which ones?

What steps do you need to take to remain one of those joined together as part of God's family the church?

Chapter two

Images of The Church as The People of God

You are God's own people.
The church can be seen as a people

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10^{NIV}

1. List at least four facts we learn about the people of God from these verses.

2. What is our responsibility as the people of God according to this verse? _____

3. The scripture gives us three negative pictures of the people before they belong to God. What are they, and what does this mean to us?

Names of the people of God

Communion. How does this unite us with Christ? ____

How does this make us part of the body of Christ? ____

What does it mean that "many are one body?" _____

5. Read Colossians 1:18 We know that we are part of the body of Christ. Who is the head? _____

Why is he the head? _____
6. Read Ephesians 1:22-23 How is the church described here? _____
7. Read Romans 12:4-5 Individuals are described as _____ of the one body. Are all the members the same? _____ Explain why

What is the responsibility of each member to the other members? _____
8. Read Ephesians 3:6 How are the members of the church joined together? _____

What two groups are mentioned are being joined together here? _____

How is the body described? _____
Why is this important? _____
9. Read Ephesians 4:25 What two responsibilities are listed here for the members of Christ body? _____

Images of The Church as The Body of Christ

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” 1 Corinthians 12:27

Paul is the only one to describe the church and believers as “the body of Christ.” This image is made vivid through the various applications Paul uses. We will see that the first body of Christ had to suffer and die for our sins. The second body of Christ is an analogy set up to allow us to see how we have been joined together in this great mission.

1. Read Romans 7:24 Before we meet Christ how are our bodies described? _____ Why would Paul describe it this way? _____

2. Read Romans 7:4 The Law represents the Old Testament (contract) that people are judged by. _____ What did we die to? _____ How did we die? _____ Who is the ‘ANOTHER’ we now belong to? _____

What are we responsible to do because of this spiritual change? _____
What does this mean? _____
3. Read 1 Corinthians 6:15 How are our bodies described here? _____ What is our responsibility than? _____
4. Read 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 Here Paul is speaking of _____

Read the following verses and answer the questions

4. Matthew 1:21 What is Jesus supposed to do for his people? _____

a. What does it mean, “Their sins?” _____

b. *Jesus* is the Greek form of *Joshua*, which means *the LORD saves*. Why is the name of Jesus important to his people? _____

5. Matthew 4:23 What did Jesus do for the people?

6. Were all these the People of God we have been talking about? Why or Why not?

7. John 11:50 & 18:14 What would have happened if Jesus would not have died for our sins? _____

8. Titus 2:12-14
a. How are the people of God to live each day? _____

b. Why? _____

c. What are some things we need to say NO to? _____

9. Acts 13:23-26

a. According to verse 23 what people was Jesus first sent to? _____

b. According to verse 24 who did John preach to? What did he preach for them to do? _____

What does this mean to you? _____

c. From verse 26 - List everyone who Jesus brought the message of salvation to.

d. read Luke 2:30-32 List everyone who salvation is provided for. _____

10. 2 Corinthians 6:16 What has God promised to do for his people? _____

What does this mean to you? _____

What Images are used to describe the church in the following verses? Why is each image important?

11. Ephesians 3:6 _____

Acts 26:7 _____

Philippians 3:3 _____

Galatians 3:7 _____

Romans 9:27 & 11:5 _____

1 Peter 1:1 _____

1 Peter 5:2,3 _____

John 21:15, 16 _____

1 Peter 2:5 _____

15. Read 1 Peter 2:17 What are believers called here?

Why would Peter use this term? _____

What similar term would we use today? _____

16: Read 1 Thessalonians 3:13 and Jude 1:14. What are the believers called who are now with Jesus? _____

The word for holy here is the same root word that means sanctified. We begin the process here so we will be ready to take up our appointed position when we arrive in heaven with the Lord.

17. List the contrast for the believer in the following verses:

Romans 6:8 We _____ with Christ

we also _____ with Christ

Philippians 1:29 we _____ on Him

we _____ for him

Discussion Questions:

How would you describe a person who is living a holy life?

If you are going to be holy you have to do so in mind , body and spirit. How are these different?

How can you be holy in your (give examples)

Mind?

Body?

Spirit?

9. Read Matthew 10:1 What were the followers of Jesus called in the beginning. _____

This word means student or follower.

10. Read Acts 6:1-2, 7, 11:29, 14:21, What were the new followers called in the book of Acts? _____

11. Read Romans 6:18 What are the believers called here? _____ What does it mean to be set free from sin? _____

Righteousness is a word related to justification. You are justified or declared innocent, then you continue to live as an innocent person. That is you live a righteous life, or continue to be innocent.

12. Read Philippians 2:12, Hebrews 6:9, 2 Peter 3:8 How are the believers referred to in these verses? _____

Why do you think this is a title for believers? _____

13. Read 1 Corinthians 3:5, Revelation 1:1 How are the believers referred to in these verses? _____

What does this tell us about how we are to live our lives? _____

14. Read Galatians 3:26 What are the believers called here? _____ Why is this used as a title for believers? _____

Why are they called this in Matthew 5:9? _____

1 Corinthians 3:16 _____
Romans 9:6 _____
Romans 12:1 _____

12. Read Genesis 22:1-13 Discussion questions
Why did God ask Abraham to Sacrifice Isaac?

Discussion Questions:

What do you think it means to be a "people of God?"

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

According to this verse what can divide people?

Why do you think this happens?

According to this verse what unites people?

Why do you think this happens?

Chapter three

Images of The Church as The New Creation

You are a new creation.

The church can be seen as those changed by God.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17

We need to begin to see ourselves as Christ sees us. He wants us to be different after we come to him. This difference or change is not what we have done but what we receive or experience. The word pictures in the New Testament of who we are, show a series of rich images that should encourage and strengthen us.

1. What causes a person to be a new creation? Explain.

2. What does it mean 'the old has gone?' _____

3. Can you think of two ways that apply to the phrase 'the new has come?' _____

4. Read Galatians 6:15 Who are the circumcised spoken about here? _____
Who are the uncircumcised mentioned here? _____

5. Read John 17:12-19

- a. Who is speaking here? _____
- b. Who is he speaking to? _____
- c. What does he want them to be protected from?

- d. What did Jesus do for the believers in verse 19?

- e. Jesus wants the believer to be _____
_____, which means set apart for God's use. (or it means to be holy)

6. Read 1 Corinthians 14:33 In the local churches believers are called _____. The word saints (hagios) or holy ones means to be holy or set apart for God. So those who are saints are those who are sanctified.

7. Read 1 Corinthians 6:11 List the three events that happen to the believer in this verse.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

The first refers to baptism, the second refers to being made holy, the third is an expression that can best be compared to being declared innocent in a court of law. You are allowed to go free.

8. Read Luke 22:49 What word is used to describe the believers with Jesus here? _____

What does this mean to you? _____

Images of The Church as The Fellowship of Faith

Those who are called saints are the church and can be seen as those that are separated to be used by God.

The new testament church functions around the concept of being changed by Jesus. The change is reflected in the way that individuals live their daily lives as "Christians," or in a Christ-like manner. A key word is 'hagios' which means 'holy' or 'sacred'. This word is used in several places and forms to describe the New Testament believers.

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified (*hagaizo*) in Christ Jesus and called to be holy (*hagios*), together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: 1 Corinthians 1:2 (Greek words added)

1. How are the believers described in this verse? _____

2. What are the believers called to be? _____
3. According to this verse how are believers everywhere suppose to live their lives? _____
4. What does this mean to you? _____

How do they become the new creation? _____

5. Read James 1:18 What two images are used to describe the new Creation? _____

What do these two have in common? _____

How are these two different? _____

6. Read 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23. How is Christ described in these verses? _____
7. Read Revelation 14:4 How are the believers described in this verse? _____
Where were they before coming to know Christ? _____

What is their purpose now? _____

8. Read Colossians 3:9-11 What image is given to represent the changing from the old self to the new self? _____

From verse 11 list the eight different type of people that have put on the new self. _____

How were they different before? _____

How do they become alike? or What makes them the same? _____

Who is the creator in this verse? see also John 1:1-3

9. Read 2 Corinthians 3:18 List three reasons we should live

with our spiritual faces uncovered? _____

How can these come from the Lord to us? _____

10. Read Ephesians 2:14-22 and answer the questions
a. verses 14-18 who is the 'He' that is being talked about?

b. What is His purpose according to verse 15? _____

c. Who did he preach to in verse 17? _____

d. According to verse 19 who did we used to be? _____

What three ways does this verse describe who we become? _____

e. In verse 20 how are the apostles described? _____

How is Jesus described? _____

f. In verse 21 & 22 how are we described? _____

so we are becoming part of the _____

11. Read 1 Corinthians 3:16 What two facts do we learn about the believer in Christ here? _____

12. Read Romans 13:11-14

a. Why should we wake up? _____

b. Verse 12 What are we to put aside? Why? _____

c. What are we to put on? Why? _____

d. Verse 14 What does it mean to clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ? _____

e. What type of choices does this represent in your life?

13. In the following verses how are the believers described?
Colossians 1:12-13 _____

Galatians 3:26 _____

Why are these important to you? _____

Discussion Questions:

How does our being changed relate to the church?

If we are part of the new Temple and Jesus is the cornerstone how should that change us?