

Theme: Christians believe in God's one Church, which is composed of all who believe in Jesus Christ, is set upon the foundation of Jesus Christ laid by the apostles, and is built through the ages by the work of the Spirit to be the dwelling place of God in the earth.

I. We Believe - In the Church???

- A. "I like your Christ, but I don't like your Christians"
- B. Attributed to Gandhi, but some Christians feel this way!
- C. The Nicene Creed enshrined biblical truth about God
- D. But then an unexpected statement - the Church?
We believe in one holy universal and apostolic church.
 - 1. What does holy, universal, apostolic even mean?
 - 2. Why is this important? Is the Church necessary?

II. We Believe - In the Catholic Apostolic Church

- A. We believe - in the 'catholic' Church?
We believe in one holy **universal** & apostolic church.
We believe in one holy **catholic** & apostolic church.
 - 1. The old word 'catholic' does NOT refer to the Roman 'Catholic' Church
 - 2. 'Catholic' means broad, general, universal, whole
 - 3. The catholic Church is the universal church, comprised of all believers at all times and places - regardless of their denomination or background.
To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with **all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours:** 1 Corinthians 1:2

- a. This is the definition of the 'catholic' or universal Church - all those everywhere who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ - their Lord and ours!
 - b. Each local church - Corinth in the 1st century or BRCC in the 21st - is but a local expression of the one universal church that stretches across the ages.
 - c. The one true church existed before us, and we are but part of it!
- 4. The One church is NOT the Roman Catholic, nor the Eastern Orthodox, nor the Southern Baptist, nor the Presbyterian, nor the non-denominational evangelical - it is the universal church of which all the others are merely a part.
 - 5. We should hold to the essentials (Trinity, Deity of Christ, salvation through Christ alone, etc.) with a firm hand, but always strive to be gracious to other believers and segments of the Church.
 - 6. In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity!
- B. We believe - in the apostolic church
Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰ **built on the foundation of the apostles** and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. Ephesians 2:19-20
 - 1. The one church is built on the one foundation of the apostles and prophets given by Jesus to the early church.
 - 2. This refers to the early apostles (and NT prophets) who were used by God to define the faith upon which the church is built.
 - 3. This foundation was laid in the first century!

4. The message given by the apostles was written in the New Testament and passed down through the generations.
And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. 2 Tim 2:2
 - a. Paul says the apostolic message was handed to Timothy and others, who were to pass it to other men, who would protect it and pass it on down through the generations.
 - b. This apostolic deposit was preserved in the New Testament, and the Church is found where these apostolic Scriptures are received, believed, taught, and obeyed from one generation to the next.
5. More in After Hours on false understandings of what these two points refer to.

III. We Believe - In God's One Holy Church

- A. The Church is God's holy people
In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a **holy** temple in the Lord. Ephesians 2:21
 1. The Temple is where God lives, and it must be holy
 2. The Temple is no longer a building; it is the Church!
 3. This means that the Church must be holy
 4. Holy originally meant 'set apart', "separate"
 - a. The church is set apart from the world
 - b. This is first because God has called us out of the world to Himself
Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, Ephesians 2:19

- c. The Ephesians were not Jews, but had been called out by God, set apart to be His people.
 - d. As a result, they are no longer foreigners but fellow citizens of God's people!
 - e. This also meant that their primary identity was no longer "Ephesian" but "the people of God!"
 - f. To be joined to God's holy people means my loyalty is now first and foremost not to my nation, my ethnic group, my political party, or any other "identity" but rather to my citizenship and identity as a member of God's holy Church!
5. Holy also refers to moral purity and separateness
 - a. God demanded that nothing morally impure come near His Temple, for God is Holy!
 - b. God's people were not to derive their morality from the surrounding peoples but rather from His Word.
 - c. This was a constant struggle for Israel!
 - d. Early Christians were often ridiculed and persecuted for refusing to condone and join the immoral practices of the surrounding culture.
 - e. To be joined to God's holy people means my I do not base my morality on the current ideas and practices of our culture, but rather on God's Word, which has revealed right and wrong that applies at all times and places.

- B. The Church is one
Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but **fellow citizens** with God's people and members of God's **household**,²⁰ built on the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.²¹ In him the **whole building is joined together** and rises to become a holy **temple** in the Lord.²² And in him you too are being **built together** to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

1. These terms all speak of unity - fellow citizens, one house/building, one foundation, one temple, built together.
2. God does not have two houses, two temples, two nations (or two bodies or two brides)!
3. The One Church is built on the One foundation of Jesus Christ - the true foundation of the Church!
For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹
Corinthians 3:11
 - a. The Church is one because it has the same foundation - Jesus Christ!
 - b. This is true for the Church as it exists in all times, all places, and in all denominations or expressions!
4. But the oneness of the Church is like the Trinitarian Oneness of God - one and many in full unity!
Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with **God's** people and members of **God's** household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with **Christ Jesus** himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his **Spirit**. Ephesians 2:19-22
 - a. God (Father), Christ Jesus, Spirit - Trinity!
 - b. Just as the LORD is One God in Three Persons, so also the Church is comprised of many local churches but is One Church!
 - c. This is also why Paul shifts the foundation metaphor from 1 Corinthians 3 in this passage so he can stress the Trinitarian unity that brings together Jew and Gentile (or any other groups)

built on **the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.**

²¹ In him the whole building is **joined together** and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.
Ephesians 2:20-21

1. Paul says the foundation is apostles and prophets
 2. He is not contradicting himself; he alters the metaphor for a key purpose
 3. Jesus is the cornerstone that joins the walls of Jew and Gentile to bring them together as one building.
 4. v19 speaks of Gentiles as new citizens, and here Paul is saying the Gentiles are not a separate church, because there is One Cornerstone that binds Jew and Gentile together - Christ Himself!
 - d. God is not just calling people of one nation, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic class, background, or any other marker - He is calling people from all of them to be part of the One Church!
 - e. People of different groups are not to isolate, but are rather being joined together by the Spirit based on the work of Christ.
5. We must work to maintain the unity given by God
As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² **Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.** ³ **Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.**
⁴There is **one body and one Spirit** — just as you were **called to one hope** when you were called — ⁵**one Lord, one faith, one baptism;** ⁶ **one God and Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all.
Ephesians 4:1-6
 - a. Note that this is another Trinitarian passage!
 - b. When we were called out by God, we were called into one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism - this is our unity!

- c. But we have to make every effort to keep that unity, for it is not automatic!
- d. To keep the unity requires humility, gentleness, patience, etc - this is not natural or easy!
- e. This also requires submitting personal preferences and desires to the more important realities of the unity we have been given in Christ.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do I see the importance of the Church?

1. It has become popular to dismiss the Church as irrelevant or even an impediment to walking with Jesus, but this is radically unbiblical!
2. The Creed follows Scripture to affirm the importance of God's Church for all believers at all times, places, and situations!
3. Beneath these modern critiques is almost always a wrong understanding of Scripture and how one grows as a Christian, and also a very distorted view of the actions of the Church.
4. The Church has certainly sinned and fallen short, and it will continue to do so, for ALL groups of human beings have an endless capacity to sin, cover up, and generally make a mess of things!
5. The church has hypocrites and people who can even say or do harmful things - like the grocery store, work, little league teams, the doctor's office - everywhere! To not come into contact with this one would mean leaving the universe!
6. The NT church had all of these problems, too!

7. But God Himself has promised to work in and through the Church, and He commands all believers to be part of local churches where they can be built together with other believers to live out their faith.
8. Have I allowed past hurts or bad ideas to prevent me from following Jesus by being part of a local church where I love, connect, serve, and reach?
9. Make membership in the church a vital part of your life and walk with Christ!

B. The Lord's Table

1. We come to this Table each week, not because we like strange old rituals but because God has PROMISED to meet us and strengthen us here!
2. This is why Christians across the ages have come to this Table, and why we will until Jesus returns!
3. We join with believers across the ages and around the world today in reciting the Creed, coming to the Table, receiving from our great God.
4. The Nicene Creed and the Lord's Table

We Believe - In God's Church

Ephesians 2:19-22
 November 9, 2025
 Communion
 Romans 15:5-6

Teaching keywords: Church; unity; apostles; Tradition and traditionalism

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5-6

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22