

**KNOW THE TRUTH**  
**Lesson 11 - The Church (1 of 2)**

Outline is drawn from pages 283-306 of Know the Truth - A Handbook of Christian Belief by Bruce Milne.

**KEY CONCEPTS FROM CHAPTER 23 - "THE IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH"**

**I. Biblical Images of the Church**

A. The people of God

1. "God's relationship with his people is the central theme of the OT, expressed in the repeated declaration, 'I will be your God, and you will be my people' (Exod. 6:7; 19:5; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 30:22; Ezek. 36:28; Hos. 2:23)." (Milne, 284)
2. "This relationship began in the covenant made with Noah (Gen. 6:18f.) and then with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 12:1f.; 15:1-19; 17:3-14). This latter was reaffirmed at a national level in the time of Moses (Exod. 6:6f.; 19-24) and of David (Ps. 89:3f.; 2 Sam. 7:12-17)." (Milne, 284)
3. "The notion of the people of God continues in the NT church, 'the Israel of God' (Gal. 6:16). Peter makes particular use of it (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. Titus 2:14) and the Bible closes with the triumphant affirmation that 'the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people' (Rev. 21:3)." (Milne, 284)
4. "The covenant basis of the relationship also continues in the NT. The church inherits the promises to Israel on the basis of the new covenant made through the sacrifice of the Messiah, Jesus (Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20; Heb. 9:15; cf. Jer. 31:31)." (Milne, 284)
5. "Something of the essential character of the 'people of God' is indicated by the two OT words used for them. The first, qāhāl, means a gathering in response to God's call (Exod. 35:1; Num. 16:26; Deut. 9:10); this word was translated as ekklēsia (church) in the Greek version of the OT and is therefore the key to 'church' in the NT. The second, 'ēdā, means the national religious community one joined by birth (Exod. 12:3; Num. 16:9; 31:12). The early Christians saw their historic precedent in the dynamic notion of qāhāl, the people of God assembled in response to the direct calling of God." (Milne, 284)
6. "This biblical background implies that the 'church' is essentially the living community of those who have responded to the call of God, and therefore not the formal ecclesiastical structure immediately brought to mind today by the word 'church'." (Milne, 285)

B. The body of Christ

1. "The relationship of the church to Christ is, however, very close indeed; it is a form of organic union by which we are made one in life and being with him (Col. 3:4)." (Milne, 285)
2. "Sometimes Christ is himself pictured as the whole body, while we are members 'within' him (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:16; 12:27)." (Milne, 285)
3. "Paul also handles the image in a slightly different way, presenting Christ as the head of the body (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19)." (Milne, 285)

C. The bride of Christ

1. "This vivid image has its roots in the OT where God speaks of Israel as his bride (Isa. 54:5–8; 62:5; Jer. 2:2). Tragically, Israel proved unfaithful (Jer. 3; Ezek. 16)." (Milne, 286)
  2. "Jesus took up this metaphor, referring to himself as the bridegroom whose presence among the wedding guests made fasting inappropriate (Mark 2:18–20). Christ embodies God's husband-love for the church, expressed supremely in his self-sacrifice for her so that the church might be presented to her heavenly bridegroom 'as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless' (Eph. 5:27)." (Milne, 286)
  3. "This image underlines that God's relationship to his people is one of unqualified love. He has chosen and redeemed us because his desire is towards us; we are the objects of his eternal love." (Milne, 286)
- D. The building of God
1. "This metaphor is rooted in the OT references to God's presence among his people (Exod. 25:8; Ps. 132:13f.; Isa. 12:6) in the tabernacle housing the ark of the covenant (Exod. 25:8–22; 1 Sam. 4:21f.) and later in the temple built by Solomon (2 Chr. 7:1–3)." (Milne, 286)
  2. "Our Lord implied that the temple was no longer the place of God's abode: 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days' (John 2:19), his ultimate reference being to the temple of his body (John 2:21). He also asserted that the overriding consideration in approaching God is not geographical location, but the heart attitude and disposition (John 4:23)." (Milne, 286)
  3. "...the church was created as the body of Christ, the new temple of God's presence. Christ is himself the foundation stone (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20) on whom the people of God are built as 'God's temple' (1 Cor. 3:16), 'a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit' (Eph. 2:22). The completion of this remains in the future, at the Lord's return: 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God' (Rev. 21:3)." (Milne, 287)
- E. The kingdom of God
1. "While it is wrong to equate the kingdom with the church, when the church truly submits to Christ by obeying his word she becomes the instrument of God's rule. Further, although the church awaits the full coming of the kingdom, she is able by the ministry of the Spirit to embody in a real measure the life of the kingdom in her experience of mutual love and service." (Milne, 287)
- F. The family of God
1. "This image was foreshadowed in the OT where Israel was called God's son (Hos. 11:1), referring forward to Jesus (Matt. 2:15), God's Son in the ultimate sense." (Milne, 288)
  2. "In the NT, the full terms of this image become apparent. In Christ we are born again into the family of God, adopted as his children, and God's Spirit is sent into our hearts so that we may call him Father (Rom. 8:14–17). The church is therefore the family or household of God (Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15)." (Milne, 288)
- G. The flock of God
1. "Israel was God's flock (Pss. 80:1; 95:7). When the leaders or 'shepherds' of Israel failed to tend the flock, God asserted his concern: 'I myself will tend my sheep' (Ezek. 34:15)." (Milne, 288)

2. "Jesus makes this shepherding ministry his own (John 10:1–30). He is the Chief Shepherd of God's flock (1 Pet. 5:4; 2:25; Heb. 13:20), giving his life for them (John 10:11)." (Milne, 288)
3. "He now sends his servants to be 'under-shepherds' to God's flock (John 21:17; Acts 20:28f.; 1 Pet. 5:1–3)." (Milne, 288)

#### H. The vineyard of God

1. "Israel is a vine which God brought out of Egypt and planted in Canaan; 'it took root and filled the land' (Ps. 80:8f.). But when God came to gather the fruit, the 'good grapes' of obedience and righteousness, it yielded only the bitter fruit of injustice and oppression (Isa. 5:1f., 7); so God made it a wasteland (v. 6)." (Milne, 288)
2. "In one of his parables Jesus applied this to the transference of God's redeeming purpose to the Gentiles, adding that the owner's son, killed by the tenants, would be the agent of this change (Mark 12:1–12). He himself is the true vine whose branches are fruitful as they abide in him (John 15:1–8)." (Milne, 288)

## II. Characteristics of the True Church

### A. One

1. "The unity of the church derives from its being grounded in the one God (Eph. 4:1–6). All who truly belong to the church are one people and hence the true church will be distinguished by its unity" (Milne, 289)

### B. Holy

1. "The people of God are a 'holy people' (1 Pet. 2:9)." (Milne, 291)
2. "In the deepest sense the church is holy, in the same way that every individual Christian is holy by virtue of being united to Christ, separated to him and credited with his perfect righteousness (cf. Part 4, pp. 209–215)." (Milne, 291)
3. "Union with Christ involves also a certain visible holiness of life. Hence a church's relationship with Christ the church's head will be expressed in the moral character and tone of their common life and relationships. A church which is a stranger to holiness is a stranger to Christ." (Milne, 291)

### C. Catholic

1. "Catholic' literally means 'referring to the whole'." (Milne, 292)
2. "The key aspect of the early church's catholicity was its openness to all. In distinction from Judaism with its racial exclusivism, and gnosticism with its intellectual and cultic exclusivism, the church opened its arms to all who would hear its message and embrace its Saviour, irrespective of colour, race, social status, intellectual capacity or moral history." (Milne, 292)

### D. Apostolic

1. "The apostle is a witness to the ministry and resurrection of Jesus, and hence an authorized bearer of the gospel (Luke 6:12f.; Acts 1:21f.; 1 Cor. 15:8–10). The apostles stand between Jesus and all subsequent generations of Christian faith; we reach him only by way of the apostles and their testimony to him incorporated in the NT. In this fundamental sense the whole church is 'built on the foundation of the apostles' (Eph. 2:20; cf. Matt. 16:18; Rev. 21:14)." (Milne, 292)

### E. The Reformers' marks

1. "While the Reformers did not dismiss these four traditional marks, the controversies into which they were plunged focused their attention

elsewhere. They identified two characteristics of the true visible church. 'Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there it is not to be doubted a church of God exists' (Calvin)." (Milne, 294)

F. A modern mark: missions

1. "In Jesus' instruction about the life of the church (John 13 – 16; Luke 10:1–20; Acts 1:1–8) we see clearly a further element, which is hardly explicit in the characteristics of the church identified thus far: mission, the responsibility to take the good news of Jesus to the ends of the earth, and to care for the needy wherever they are found." (Milne, 294)

## KEY CONCEPTS FROM CHAPTER 24 - "THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH"

### I. Worship

A. Biblical examples

B. The elements of worship

1. "The offering of praise was fundamental. The Word of God, another basic element, came into Christian practice through the church's inheritance in the Jewish synagogue where the chief element was the reading and exposition of the law (Luke 4:16–27; Acts 13:14f.). In early Christian worship Scripture was publicly read (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27) and expounded (Acts 2:42f.; 6:2)." (Milne, 298)

C. Features of worship

1. The living Christ is present in the midst. (Milne, 298)
2. The Holy Spirit empowers the worship. (Milne, 298)
3. A spirit of loving fellowship pervades the congregation. (Milne, 299)

D. The 'overflow' of worship

1. "Worship, the adoring response to God, was not seen as confined to acts of corporate praise and ministry, but was to be carried over as an attitude to the whole of life." (Milne, 300)

### II. Fellowship

- A. "Fellowship (Gk. *koinōnia*) and the church's glorifying God are closely linked: 'Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God' (Rom. 15:7). As Christians live together in true fellowship, God is magnified. *Koinōnia* essentially means sharing together in something. Its emphasis is therefore somewhat different from the general use of 'fellowship' among us today, i.e. mutual association. The two meanings are not finally distinct, however, since common participation involves mutual association." (Milne, 300)

### III. Ministry

A. Gifts of the Spirit

B. Specialized ministry

C. Ministry beyond the church

### IV. Witness

- A. "The call to witness (Gk. *martyria*) lay at the heart of Jesus' final instructions to the apostles (Acts 1:8) and at Pentecost they set about the task." (Milne, 304)
- B. "The church of today stands in spiritual succession to the first generation of believers only as it commits itself to similar witness." (Milne, 304)
- C. "In the legal context *martyria* means making a defense...