

BIBLE CHALLENGE 2019

Week 28: July 7-13

What is the Church?

Read: Deuteronomy 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1-3,8; 31:30; Joshua 8:35; 1 Samuel 17:47; 1 Kings 8:14,22,65; 1 Chronicles 13:2,4; 28:8; 29:1,10,20; Nehemiah 8:2,17; Psalm 22:22,25; 26:12; 35:18; 46:1-7; 51:18; 87:2; 89:5; 107:32; 118:22; 122:6-9; 125:2; 137:5-6; 149:1; Proverbs 5:14; 18:10; Song of Solomon 7:10; Isaiah 28:16; 43:2-6; 54:14,17; 62:6-7; Lamentations 1:10; Joel 2:16; Matthew 5:13-16; 16:16-18; 18:17; 21:42; Acts 5:11; 7:38; 8:1,3; 9:31; 11:22,26; 12:1,5; 13:1; 14:23,27; 15:3-4,22,41; 16:5; 18:22; 19:32,39-40; 20:17,28; Romans 16:1,4-5,16,23; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:9-11; 4:17; 6:4; 7:17; 10:32; 11:16,18,22; 12:27-28; 14:4-5,12,19,23,28,33-35; 16:1,19; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 8:1,18-19,23-24; 11:8,28; 12:13; Galatians 1:2,13,22; Ephesians 1:22; 2:20; 3:10-11,21; 4:12; 5:23-25,17,29,32; Philippians 3:6; 4:15; Colossians 1:18,24; 4:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:1,4; 1 Timothy 3:5,15; 5:16; Philemon 2; Hebrews 2:12; 10:24-25; 12:23; James 5:14; 1 Peter 2:7; 3 John 6,9-10; Revelation 1:4,11,20; 22:16. Read Revelation 2-3 in full.

Often this is a question that we take for granted. And, perhaps, because we all assume that everyone knows what the word means, that is why there are so many arguments and disagreements regarding it. Furthermore, because we use the word "church" in a variety of ways, we sometimes misunderstand how the Bible is using the term.

To start with, in English, the word "church" comes from the German word *Kirche*, which in turn derives from the Greek phrase, *κυριακὸν δῶμα* (*kuriakon doma*), which quite literally means, "the Lord's House." This is not a phrase that is used in the Greek New Testament, but it is a phrase that would be adopted by the church in the later first century AD.

So, in this case, the word derives from the place where people gathered for worship. The word in the New Testament that is translated as "Church" in our Bibles, though is the Greek word *ἐκκλησία* (*ekklasia*). Literally, this word means "the ones who are called out." The very word itself is a reminder that God has called out his church from the world and bound them together as a congregation.

When the Jews translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek, they took their word for the "congregation," which was *קהל* (*qahal*), meaning "gathered ones," and used the word *ἐκκλησία* (*ekklasia*) in their text. This is extremely significant because it demonstrates that the Christian church in the New Testament was not making up new ideas and new names for things, but rather that they saw themselves as the continuation of the Jewish people — True Israel, the true *קהל* (*qahal*) even — and as a result, they chose terms and vocabulary that the Jewish people would have been very familiar with from synagogue worship.

It cannot be overemphasized that the Christian church was not doing a new thing, but rather saw that all of the Old Testament not only pointed to Christ, but also that the forms and structures of the church should be maintained in light of Christ's completed work.

The final way that the term "church" is used in the English language speaks of the institution of the church itself. Certainly, the church is the body of Christ. Given that the Body of Christ is made up of the universal church, it should not be surprising to see this term used in such a way. Some argue as to whether any of the Biblical references can be said to speak of the organization of the church body institutional, but that does not

really speak to our question here. The term, in English, gets used in three distinct but related senses.

What is the Importance of the Church?

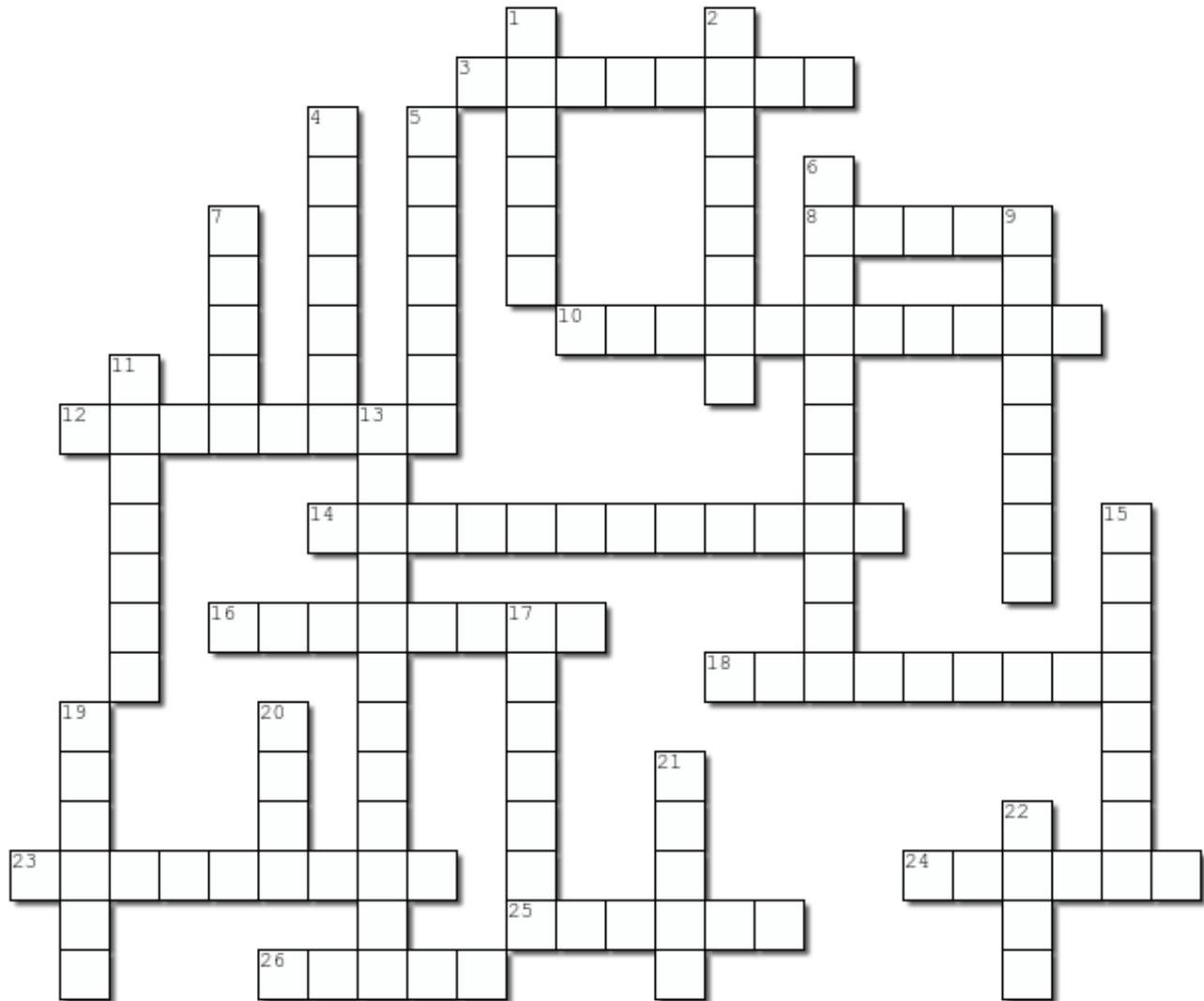
Sadly, a lot of people think and act as if the church is not that important — that it is more like a kind of country-club for believers to get together and go through certain old rituals. They have embraced the thought that so long as they are saved and not going to hell, then all is good and the church really has no other spiritual function beyond facilitating the salvation of people. And this way of thinking could not be any further from the truth — and no, you cannot worship as well on the golf course.

The thing to understand is that not only is there ordinarily no salvation outside of the church, there is also ordinarily no Christian living outside of the context of the church. One of the analogies that the Apostle Paul uses for the church is that of a body. If you amputate a part off of the body, it dies. If you chop a finger off in an accident with a log splitter (I've met several people in our community who have had this happen!), it doesn't go out on its own and grow a new body, it dies unless reattached to the body very quickly. So too, when the person is disconnected from the spiritual body of believers, his or her faith withers quickly.

The church also has a job: make disciples of all the nations. We are also to tear down strongholds of Satan and be pillars and buttresses of Truth in our community. Yet we cannot do this on our own. We must do this in the context of a church that is mobilized and at work together — being salt and light together. We are also to worship jointly and to sit under the preaching of the Word jointly, which brings unity to the body. If you want unity of purpose in a church, it primarily comes from people gathering together to listen to the word together, to sit under its preaching and being jointly committed to putting into practice that which is preached and applied.

And it is in the context of the church that we are to be salt and light in our community. Too often Christians fall into the trap of being defeatists. They just assume that things are going to be bad and against Biblical truth in society because we are waiting for Jesus' return — a time when Jesus will put all things in order. In the meantime, though, it is our job, as the church, empowered by the Spirit, while we wait for our Lord to arrive, to govern this old world in such a way that we honor Christ.

Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

3. This, Paul writes, is an example that points to the church.
8. Anyone born of a 'forbidden union' was not to come into the assembly of God's people until this generation.
10. This will not prevail against the church. (3 words)
12. 'The God of Jacob is our _____.'
14. Who the Jews translated the Old Testament into Greek, they used the term for 'church' to refer to this.
16. This is known as the 'Lukewarm Church.'
18. The author of Hebrews speaks of the church as the 'Assembly of the _____.' (2 words)
23. 'Pray for the peace of _____.'
24. 'In the midst of the congregation, I will ____ you.'
25. This disciple is known as 'Niger' or 'Black' leading many to think that he was from Africa.
26. Christians in the church are called to be the Light of the _____.

Down

1. The leaders of this church were instructed to 'strengthen what is about to die.'
2. God establishes his prophets as _____ on the walls of Israel.
4. For I am the Lord your God, the _____ of Israel.' (2 words)
5. This is a gift of being able to speak in foreign languages not before known and a sign of judgment on Jerusalem.
6. 'The name of the Lord is a _____.' (2 words)
7. 'I will thank you in the _____ congregation.'
9. Paul instructs Christians to greet one another with this sign of affection. (2 words)
11. This king of Israel not only stood and spoke to the whole assembly, but performed sacrifices.
13. God saves not with _____... (3 words).
15. This 'encouraging' brother often traveled with Paul.
17. This church in Asia had lost its first love.
19. God instructs this class of leaders to be assembled during a time of return to faith.
20. Nehemiah records this person standing on a raised platform and preaching the Law to the people.
21. This is another name for Sinai.
22. This man persecuted the church before his conversion...later he becomes known by a different name.