

Three Important Images of the Church

The Church Is the People of God

Exodus 6:3–7 (“I will take you as my own people”)

Who first chose the people of Israel as God’s people: God or the Israelites? Why is this important?

Why are the Israelites more free as the people of God than they would have been if they were not God’s people?

Deuteronomy 28:8–10 (“The LORD will establish you”)

God makes a covenant with his people Israel. How is Israel’s faithfulness to God’s covenant a sign of belonging to God as his people?

Judges 20:1–2 (“the assembly gathered to the LORD”)

What does it mean to say that all the Israelites came out “as one” (verse 1)? What does the idea of the people of God suggest about the sense of unity that existed among the Israelites?

Hebrews 4:8–11 (“a Sabbath rest still remains for the people of God”)

Why is a time for rest, reflection, and prayer important for the people of God? Could there be such a thing as a “people of God” without communal worship?

1 Peter 2:9–10 (“now you are God’s people”)

What is the difference between a group such as a political party or an environmental organization and “God’s people”? Is there a significant difference in identity?

The notion of the “People of God” has ancient roots in both the Old and New Testaments. What does this phrase mean for you personally?

Why is the phrase “People of God” important to the Church and for all who are baptized? Could we be saved without the Church of Jesus Christ?



The Church Is the Body of Christ

Romans 12:1–8 (“so we, though many, are one body in Christ”)

How can the Body of Christ be *one* and yet so *diverse*?

1 Corinthians 12:12–26 (“the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary”)

What are the implications of Saint Paul’s statement that one part of the body cannot say to another part, “I don’t need you”? If someone in the Body of Christ (the Church) is a real “pain in the neck,” can you exclude her or him?

In the image of the Church as the Body of Christ, is anyone more important than anyone else? Explain your answer.

1 Corinthians 12:27–30 (“Now you are Christ’s body, and individually parts of it”)

Which gifts does Saint Paul name as most important within the intimate relationship we share as members of the Body of Christ?

As a member of the Body of Christ, do you lose your individuality?

Ephesians 3:4–10 (“the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel”)

Since salvation had been promised to the Jewish people, why is it significant that Saint Paul also included the Gentiles as full members of the Body of Christ?

What does including those who are outside the “in” group say about the mission of the Church as the Body of Christ?

Ephesians 4:11–16 (“building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God”)

In what sense are Christians “bodybuilders”?

Why is full incorporation into the Body of Christ necessary to know truth and to avoid false teaching and trickery?

How can our close relationship with the Church help us to better evaluate what we hear and see from the people we know, media, politics, and so on?

How does the imagery of the Body of Christ inform respect for our own bodies and the bodies of others?



The Church Is the Temple of the Holy Spirit

2 Samuel 7:1–10 (“I was with you wherever you went”)

King David sought advice from the prophet Nathan about building a temple for the Lord. Until this time the Ark of the Covenant traveled with the Israelites and was kept in a tent. What can we learn here about “where” God’s temple (or tabernacle) really should be?

Jeremiah 31:31–33 (“I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts”)

The covenant with Israel, represented by the Ten Commandments, was recorded on stone tablets and placed in the temple by King David. What is the significance of Jeremiah’s prophecy that the law (covenant) would be written on people’s hearts?

Mark 14:53–58 (“I will destroy this temple made with hands and within three days I will build another not made with hands”)

What kind of “temple” do you think Jesus is referring to when he talks about “another not made with hands”?

What does this passage, and Jeremiah’s prophecy, tell you about the relationship between a community of faith and a church building?

1 Corinthians 3:10–17 (“Do you not know that you are the temple of God?”)

What does Saint Paul mean when he says “you are the temple of God” and “the Spirit of God dwells in you”?

If God’s spirit dwells within us, in our very bodies, what difference does it make how we treat our minds and bodies, and how we treat others?

Ephesians 2:19–22 (“Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple”)

Why is the temple of the Holy Spirit being built but not fully complete? What does this say about our own life in the spirit?

Revelation 7:13–17 (“they stand before God’s throne and worship him day and night in his temple”)

In this passage from the Book of Revelation, what does the temple refer to?

As both body and spirit, what value does the imagery of ourselves as a temple have for us?

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