

The “Church” in Matthew

Matthew’s View of the Church

The Church Is Instituted by Jesus and Founded on His Authority

Jesus says, “I will build my church” (16:18); establishing the church is part of his mission on earth.

Jesus grounds his “Great Commission” to the disciples on the fact that he has been given “all authority in heaven and earth” (28:18).

Jesus also says that the church will have divine authority to “bind and loose” (18:18).

The Definitive Characteristic of the Church Is the Presence of Jesus

Jesus promises that he will be present wherever two or three gather in his name (18:19) and to be with his followers to the end of the age (28:20).

Special attention is given throughout this Gospel to characters who are said to be “with Jesus”: his mother (2:11), outcasts (9:11), a follower (26:51), and disciples (16:21; 20:17–19; 26:37–38, 40, 69, 71). This is significant, since Jesus says in 12:30, “Whoever is not with me is against me” (cf. 12:14; 26:59; 27:1).

The Church Is Portrayed as “The Family of God”

Jesus, who is the Son of God, designates his disciples as his true family and says that whoever does the will of God is his “brother and sister and mother” (12:46–50). He also says that whatever is done to any member of his family is done to him (25:40).

Followers of Jesus are called “children of God” (5:9, 45; 13:38; cf. 23:9).

The Church Is Typified by Limited “Faith” and by “Understanding” That Is Given by Jesus

The disciples of Jesus are presented as people of “little faith” (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20), but Jesus makes it clear that this is sufficient (17:20).

The disciples are presented as people who “understand” Jesus (13:51; 16:12), but typically this is only after they have been given understanding by Jesus.