



The Essentials: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine
Class #7 – The Church

I. **The Definition of the Church**

a. Let's look at the Definition of the Church

- i. The Greek word for *church* is the word *ekklesia* which is a compound word derived from the Greek words *ek* (“out of”) and *kaleo* (“to call”)
- ii. The word *ekklesia* carries the idea of the “*called out group*” or the “*called out ones*”
- iii. The English word *church* is derived from the Greek word *kuriakon* which carries the idea of “*belonging to the Lord*”
- iv. Therefore, we can define the word *church* as a group of people called out from the world, called unto God, and belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ

II. **The Aspects of the Church**

a. Let's look at the Aspects of the Church

- i. What I mean by this is the **two ways** the word *church* can be viewed or referred to (used) in Scripture:

b. First, the Local Church

- i. The most common use of the word *church* in the New Testament is to refer to a group of believers who gather together regularly at a particular location to worship, fellowship, minister, study the Word, etc.
- ii. Some examples of the local church in the New Testament is the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1, 11:22), the church in Asia Minor (Acts 16:5), the church in Rome (Romans 16:5), the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1), the church in Galatia (Galatians 1:2), the church in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1), and the church in the home of Philemon (Philemon 2)
- iii. Templo Victoria Bible Fellowship is considered a local church in Cathedral City, California

c. Second, the Universal Church

- i. While the local church views the church as a group of believers gathered together in a particular locality, the universal church views the church as “*all those who, in this age, have been born again by the Spirit of God and have by that same Spirit been baptized into the Body of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 12:13; 1 Peter 1:3, 22-25)
- ii. The new birth (i.e. being born again) is the essential requirement of membership into the universal church – membership is by faith in Christ

- iii. A particular emphasis of the universal church is its unity, whether Jew or Gentile, all believers compose one body, the body of Christ
- iv. There are many denominations and local churches, but there is only one true universal church of Christ – “*All of the redeemed of this age are members of this one spiritual body*”
- v. **Galatians 3:27-28** – “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*”
- vi. **Ephesians 4:4** – “*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling*”
- d. The universal church is sometimes referred to as the invisible church and the local church as the visible church
 - i. I am often asked the question, “*Could a person be saved and not be a member of a church?*” There are two correct answers to that question:
 - ii. Yes, a person could be saved and not be a member of a local church, however, it is impossible to be saved and not be a member of the universal church

III. **The Birth of the Church**

- a. Let’s look at the Birth of the Church – “*When did the church begin?*”
 - i. Although some would suggest the church existed in the Old Testament, an examination of the New Testament indicates that the church is a peculiar New Testament entity that had not previously existed
 - ii. In **Matthew 16:18**, the Lord Jesus declared, “*I will build my church,*” this indicates that the building of the church was still a future work
 - iii. It would seem, from this verse, that the church was not yet in existence when Jesus spoke these words...
 - iv. The Lord Jesus was making a prediction concerning His future building of His church and this prediction finds its fulfillment in **Acts 2** – the church was *birthed*, or *founded*, on the Day of Pentecost
 - v. In **1 Corinthians 12:13**, the apostle Paul tells us the manner in which the church is being built – he tells us that it is the work of the Spirit in baptizing believers into the body of Christ
 - vi. Now, according to **Acts 2**, the baptism of the Spirit occurred on the Day of Pentecost, and thus, that was the day the church was founded
 - vii. From the Day of Pentecost, till today, every individual who places their faith and trust in Jesus Christ and experiences the new birth becomes a member of the church (the body of Christ)
 - viii. God has always had a people set apart unto Him – in the Old Testament there were many saints (saved by faith in the coming Messiah), but the entity known as the church didn’t come into existence until the Day of Pentecost
 - ix. Thus, I believe there is a *distinction* between the Nation of Israel and the Church – the church did not replace Israel

IV. The Descriptions of the Church

a. Let's look at the Descriptions of the Church

- i. Throughout the New Testament, many figures, or pictures, are used to describe the church
- ii. A study of these descriptions can teach us many things about the church's relationship *with Christ* and believer's (who make up the church) relationship *with each other*
- iii. Let's look at a few of them:

b. First, a Body

- i. The description "a body" emphasizes the *unity* of the church and its *submission* to Christ (the Head)
- ii. Within the church of Jesus Christ, there is no distinction, there is no favorites, there is no Jew or Gentiles, but all believers are one in Christ
- iii. **1 Corinthians 12:25-26** – *"There should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one members suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."*
- iv. Furthermore, just as the head has authority over the physical body, so Christ, as the head of the church, has authority over His body
- v. **Colossians 1:18** – *"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."*
- vi. Also, as the head of the church, the Lord Jesus nourishes His body by giving gifted leaders to His church that it might grow to maturity and be built up as one body (Ephesians 4:12, 16; Colossians 2:19)
- vii. All members of the body of Christ are called to submit to the leaders which the Lord Jesus has given to their local church – *"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you"* Cf. **Hebrews 13:17**

c. Second, a Bride

- i. The description of the church as the bride of Christ is seen in **Ephesians 5:23** where an analogy is drawn that compares the husband and wife relationship to Christ's relationship with His church
- ii. This description is important because it reveals the magnitude of Christ's love for the church, *"And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her."* Cf. **Ephesians 5:2, 25**
- iii. Also, this description emphasizes the exalted position and blessings the church has received in Christ

- iv. As the bride of Christ, we have been given the *status of adopted children* (John 1:12-13), we have been *granted access to God* (Hebrews 4:16), we find *all our needs provided for* (Philippians 4:19), we have been *promised protection and care* (Matthew 28:20), and we are *awaiting the return of our Husband and the soon wedding which will follow* (Revelation 19:1-16)
- d. Third, a Building
 - i. The description “a building” emphasizes the oneness, unity, and growth of the church
 - ii. Jesus Christ Himself is the *chief cornerstone* (Ephesians 2:20) and the whole building is being *fitted together* in Him (Ephesians 2:21)
 - iii. **Ephesians 2:20-22** – *“Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”*
 - iv. As a building grows when under construction, so the church, as a building, is growing as new believers are being added by the Lord
 - v. Family, take courage in the fact that the Lord Jesus never runs out of resources, He always finishes His work on time, and He is preparing and reading His church for eternity – *“He will smooth out the stones”*
- e. Fourth, a Priesthood
 - i. **1 Peter 2:5** – *“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”*
 - ii. This statement by the apostle Peter is reminiscent of **Exodus 19:5-6** where God declared that the Nation of Israel was a *“kingdom of priests”*
 - iii. However, amongst the Nation of Israel, only the Levites were able to serve as priests, however, in the church, every believer is a priest
 - iv. As a priesthood of believers, we are responsible to represent God before the people (2 Corinthians 5:20), represent the people before God (1 Timothy 2:1-2), and offer spiritual sacrifices unto God through the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5)
 - v. What kind of spiritual sacrifices? The sacrifice of *self* (Romans 12:1), the sacrifice of *souls* (Romans 15:16), the sacrifice of *stuff* (Philippians 4:18), the sacrifice of *song* (Hebrews 13:15), and the sacrifice of *service* (Hebrews 13:6)
- f. Fifth, a Flock
 - i. A beautiful, tender image describing the relationship of believers to the Lord is found in **John 10:16** where the church is called a flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:3)
 - ii. This description emphasizes that members of the church, as the sheep of Christ, belong to Him

- iii. The Lord Jesus emphasizes that the flock is “**My Sheep**” (John 10:26-27) and that they are secure in His hand (John 10:28)
- iv. Also, the Lord tells us that His sheep know His voice – there is an intimate and personal relationship between the Shepherd and His sheep
- v. Do you recognize His voice? Do you respond to Him? Do you know Him? Do you spend time with Him? Do you know the Psalm or do you know the Shepherd of the Psalm? Is He your Shepherd?

V. **The Purpose of the Church**

a. Let's look at the Purpose of the Church

- i. Within the New Testament, we find prescribed many *purposes* and *functions* of the church
- ii. Why is the church here? What should be taking place as the saints gather together at the local church? What should be the church's focus?
- iii. Let's look at *four purposes* of the church:

b. First, Worship

- i. The first purpose of the church we are going to look at is worship – the purpose of the church is to glorify God and to worship Him
- ii. The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins with the question, “*What is the chief end of man?*” The answer follows, “*Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.*”
- iii. This is the purpose of every individual and the purpose of the church – the Scriptures repeatedly point to worship as the primary purpose of the church
- iv. **Romans 15:5-6** – “*Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”
- v. **Ephesians 3:20-21** – “*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*”
- vi. Interestingly, within the New Testament, there are several Greek words used to describe “Worship” (let's look at two of them)
- vii. **First**, Proskuneo – this word carries the idea of kissing the hand (e.g. a dog licking his master's hand)
- viii. It came to mean “*prostrating oneself*” or “*bowing down*” in reverence before something or someone (*act of complete submission*)
- ix. The worshipper considered the object worthy of whatever they were offering (to attribute worth to the object worshipped – “worthship”)
- x. **Second**, Latreuo – this word carries the idea of a priestly service (our worship to the Lord should be shown in service)

- xi. Our entire life should be one of service-worship before the Lord – ***“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (i.e. spiritual act of worship)” Cf. Romans 12:1***
 - xii. Thus, the worship of the church consists of service before the Lord that is generated by a deep reverence for and complete submission to Him who is totally worthy of all glory, honor, and praise
 - xiii. Moreover, in **John 4:23-24**, the Lord Jesus revealed the essential character and nature of true worship, ***“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”***
 - xiv. **First**, “In spirit” – this teaches us that worship can and should take place anywhere and everywhere since spirit is not confined to a particular place or time (not limited to a certain location or period of time)
 - xv. Also, worship must be an act and expression of one’s spirit – “within” – it is not simply an outward ritual, routine, ceremony, or act
 - xvi. As we are born again by the Spirit of God (regeneration), our spirits are made alive, thus making it possible for us to worship God in spirit
 - xvii. Charles Ryrie declared, ***“True worship is a person-to-Person experience”*** – our spirit communicating with God (God is Spirit)
 - xviii. **Second**, “In truth” – this teaches us that worship must be genuine, sincere, and authentic (free from deceit, pretense, or insincerity)
 - xix. God despises insincere and fake worship – ***“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” Cf. Matthew 15:8-9***
 - xx. Fake, or false, worship is worship not according to the Word of God, therefore, to worship in truth demands a knowledge of the Word of God which will increase our appreciation of the worth of God, increase our understanding of the Diving Being whom we worship, and guide us towards how He wants to be worshipped (*Bible is the Worship Manual*)
- c. **Second, Teaching**
- i. The second purpose of the church we are going to look at is teaching – the purpose of the church is to instruct and teach the Word of God
 - ii. From the beginning, the instruction and teaching of the Word of God was a priority of the church
 - iii. The early church devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching – ***“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine...” Cf. Acts 2:42a***
 - iv. The Apostles understood that their main focus had to be the teaching of the Word of God (Acts 6:2, 4) – ***“Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem” Cf. Acts 6:7***

- v. One of Satan’s most effective weapons against the church of Jesus Christ is “Pastors” who don’t teach the Word of God
 - vi. You see, Satan understands that “*Revival starts as the Spirit of God moves amongst the people of God through the truth of the Word of God*”
 - vii. Throughout the book of Acts, we find the apostle Paul dedicating himself to teaching and sharing the Word of God everywhere he went (Acts 11:26, 18:11, 19:10, 28:30-31)
 - viii. The teaching of God’s Word must be the number one priority of the church – the church doesn’t need more programs, but more of the Word
 - ix. God gave the Holy Scriptures to His people for the purpose of teaching and instructing and bringing believers to a place of maturity, “***All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.***” Cf. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
 - x. My prayer for all of us is that God would fill us with a greater desire and hunger for His Word – “**Students of the Word**”
- d. Third, Fellowship
- i. The third purpose of the church we are going to look at is fellowship – fellowship amongst believers
 - ii. The word *fellowship* is the Greek word *koinonia* which carries the idea of “*fellowship, sharing, partnership, participation, or communion*”
 - iii. In the book of Acts, from the beginning, we see the early Christians fellowshiping amongst one another (associating and interacting)
 - iv. **Acts 2:42** – “***And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.***”
 - v. **Acts 20:7** – “***Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.***”
 - vi. The Christian life is not meant to be lived in *seclusion* or *isolation* – there should be no “*Lone Rangers*” within the Kingdom of God, but God has provided us with a family to fellowship with
 - vii. As we come to church, we gather together with other Christians to fellowship and commune with one another (*very important*)
 - viii. Furthermore, as believers, God has commanded us to be in fellowship with other Christians, “***Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as in the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.***” Cf. **Hebrews 10:25**
 - ix. Christians who refuse to fellowship and commune with other Christians are disobeying the Word of God (*very serious*)
 - x. Interestingly, the New Testament describes certain things that should be taking place amongst the fellowship of the saints (“***One Another***”)

- xi. **First**, praying for one another – “*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*” Cf. James 5:16
- xii. **Second**, comforting and edifying one another – “*Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.*” Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- xiii. **Third**, bearing one another’s burdens – “*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*” Cf. Galatians 6:2
- xiv. **Fourth**, teaching and admonishing one another – “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*” Cf. Colossians 3:16
- xv. **Fifth**, serving one another – “*through love serve one another*” Cf. Galatians 5:13
- xvi. **Sixth**, forgiving one another – “*bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complain against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*” Cf. Colossians 3:13
- xvii. **Seventh**, being kind to one another – “*And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgive you.*” Cf. Ephesians 4:32
- xviii. **Eighth**, loving one another – “*And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’*” Cf. 1 Peter 4:8

VI. The Ordinances of the Church

- a. Let’s look at the ordinances of the church
 - i. In accordance with the New Testament, we believe there to be two ordinances, or sacraments, prescribed by the Lord Jesus to be practiced within His church:
- b. First, Water Baptism
 - i. **Matthew 28:19** – “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*”
- c. Second, Communion (i.e. The Lord’s Supper)
 - i. **1 Corinthians 11:23-26** – “*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.*”