

## The Doctrine of the Church

### 1. Some New Testament descriptions of the church...

- **The People of God**
  - 1 Peter 2:9
  - A fellowship of persons made one under God's kingly rule; originally applied to Israel
- **The Called Out Ones**
  - *Ekklesia* – the called out ones, the church, Acts 11:22, 26
  - A local body, a fellowship of baptized believers voluntarily associated with one another in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, committed to Christ's teachings, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.
- **Those Sent**
  - John 17:18; *apostellein*, meaning "to send" and the noun *apostolos*, meaning "one sent"
  - The authority for the mission of the believer comes from the sender, God.
  - We are sent out like Christ was – to proclaim, witness, and minister
  - The nature of the gospel is that it is evangelistic and missionary.
- **The church of God**
  - 1 Corinthians 1:2; The church belongs to the Lord Himself
- **A fellowship of believers**
  - 1 John 1:3; *Koinonia* – sharing, participation, communion, fellowship
  - It is a gift of God as a result of a relationship with Him, not a human creation
- **The Body of Christ**
  - 1 Corinthians 12:27 and others, Ephesians 4:1-16, and others
  - Jesus Christ is the head, and the only head, of the church
  - Members of a church are members because of their intimate relationship with Christ; he adds to the church as he sees fit.
  - The purpose of the church is to carry out the will of Christ which He purposed in His heart before He came to earth
  - Like members of the physical body, members of Christ's body have a wide variety of responsibilities to carry out, both individually and collectively
  - Each member has his or her own particular and individual gifts, yet all members are interrelated to one another because the gift is the Spirit.
  - Therefore, through the Spirit, there is real and vital unity among such great diversity
  - There should never be division in the body
    - 1 Cor. 1:10, be united
    - 1 Cor. 10:24, no selfishness
    - 1 Cor. 8:9, act to protect the weaker, those who are easily offended
    - 1 Cor. 9:12, the church's unity and work are more important than anything.
- **The Family of God**
  - Those who receive Christ become children of God, John 1:12
  - Christ's family are the ones who do the will of God, Mark 3:33-35
- **The Bride of Christ**
  - 2 Corinthians 11:2-3, Revelation 19:7-9, 21:9
  - As with a wholesome marital relationship, the relationship between Christ and His people is one of love and fidelity.
  - Not to be used and abused, or you will face an angry husband.

### 2. What sets the church apart from other institutions humans have created?

- The church is a divine institution because of its relationships...
  - First to **God**: According to the New Testament the church originated in the mind of and was created to serve His purposes.

- Second to **Christ**, the Founder and Head of the Church: The proof of this relationship is in the fruit produced as a result of the connection with Christ, the Life Source, the Head of the body.
- Third to the **Spirit**, by whose power the church maintains its life and growth
- Because of these divine connections with the Trinity, the church is to be a supernatural entity. When we choose to operate according to the mundane realities of everyday life (like a business), we miss the truth of the matter, and so do the people in our community.

### 3. What are the essential activities of a church?

**Worship** – The worship of God is foundational to all other church efforts to proclaim and witness, nurture and educate, and minister. It is the only thing the church does now which will also be done in eternity.

- Worship is to praise and glorify God, Ephesians 1:3-6
- Westminster Shorter Catechism: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.”
  - *Created* for the worship of God
  - *Redeemed* for the worship of God
  - *We will live before Him forever* for the worship of God
- We gather every week for worship in order that we may meet with God together.
  - Done by the Christian community – we come *together* as the people of God, the Body of Christ
  - When we gather to worship it is not a personal, private experience. Worship planners do not focus on what will lead *you* in worship, but what will lead *us* to worship.
- Worship must be understood correctly
  - It is not for *us* – our preferences for style of worship is not a central concern
  - It is not for *unbelievers* – they do not know God and cannot worship Him; if unbelievers come to know God in worship it is incidental and a testimony to the power of God’s Word and His Presence among His people.
  - It is for *God* – He is the audience

**Proclamation and Witness** – All of God’s people are responsible for proclaiming the gospel and bearing witness to the saving power of Christ. Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:46-48, John 20:21

- God expects His people to have an outward, missionizing thrust designed to break down barriers that separate persons from God, from society, and from one another.
- Christian discipleship begins with an authentic salvation experience in response to gospel proclamation.
- The power for proclamation and witness comes from the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:8
- Involves both a lifestyle and the spoken word

### **Nurture and Education**

- *Nurture* is the sum of experiences that nourish, influence, and develop individuals within the fellowship of a church. Suggests a loving guardianship and fostering maturity.
- *Education* involves the more structured means provided for growth in knowledge, wisdom, moral righteousness, and service.
- Both are concerned with developing competent, fully grown Christians who can themselves share in the nurturing and educating of others.
- NT Churches carefully instructed new believers, Acts 2:42, 1 Corinthians 15:1-7
- New Christians were expected to grow in grace and knowledge toward full maturity in Christ, 2 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:11-13

### **Ministry**

- There are numerous NT passages making it clear God expects His people to minister to the needs of others. The model is Christ, the perfect example of self-giving, sacrificial love; Matthew 20:25-28, John 13:15
- The ministry to which Christ calls His followers takes many forms, but it is distinctive because it is done in Christ’s name and for His glory, not out of purely humanitarian motives.
- Involves practical acts of helping other Christians who are in need, and the church doing good in all the world.

*Worship, Connect, Grow, Serve, and Reach.*