

DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

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Introduction:

A Called-out Assembly. Three groups so designated:

1. A Group or gathering (Acts 19:32)
2. Israel (Acts 7:38)
3. The Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22, 23)

Referred to as:

1. A local church (I Corinthians 1:2)
2. Local churches (Galatians 1:1-3)
3. Complete body (Ephesians 5:25)

No distinction made between sects or denominations, but only as doctrine is defined.

Within the common faith, there is oneness (Ephesians 4:4-6).

I. The Definition of the Church

A. What it is not:

1. (Not) Israel (I Corinthians 10:32)
Israel is the wife of Jehovah. The church is the bride of Christ.
2. (Not a) Religious Denomination
3. (Not an) Earthly Organization
It is organized, but organization does not make it a church. It is an organism, composed of spiritually alive, regenerated people.
4. (Not) Comprised of unbelievers (Philippians 1:1,2; I Corinthians 6:9-11)
5. (Not a) Physical Building.
In the Old Testament, the people had to come to a building, to meet with God. Both Catholicism and Protestantism profess the same idea today. Consider Hollywood's pictures, and the news media's comments.

B. What it is:

1. (Philippians. 1:1) Four elements:
 - a. Location
 - b. Saved membership

- c. Pastor
- d. Deacons
- 2. Body (I Corinthians 12:12-14; Col. 1:18)
 - a. Has a Head (Ephesians 5:23a)
 - b. Has a Savior (Ephesians 5:23b)
 - c. Has a Mediator (Hebrews 9:15)
 - d. Has a High Priest (Hebrews 4:14,15)
 - e. Has Many Members (I Corinthians 12:18-20)
 - f. Has an Appointment (I Thessalonians 4:13-17, in contrast to Hebrews 9:27)
- 3. Building (Ephesians 2:19-22) (Not a physical one—see above)
 - a. Has a Builder (Matthew 16:18)
 - b. Has an Owner (I Corinthians 6:19-22). The Father:
 - 1) A Beloved Benefactor (I Peter 1:3,4)
 - 2) Source of Provision (John 16:24)
 - c. Has a Foundation
(Ephesians 2:20; I Corinthians 3:11; I Timothy 3:16)
 - d. Has a Structure
(I Peter 2:5; fitly framed together, Ephesians 2:21)
Soundness is determined by:
 - 1) Strength of the Foundation
 - 2) Quality of its Materials
All must be in place and unified.
 - e. Has an Occupant (I Corinthians. 6:19,20)
- 4. Pillar and Ground of the Truth (I Timothy 3:15)
- 5. Indestructible (Matthew 16:18). Some question as to correct interpretation, but end result may be the same.
- 6. Bride (Ephesians 5:25-32; The Revelation 21:9)
Espoused to one Husband
(II Corinthians. 11:2; The Revelation 19:7,8)

II. The Origin of the Church

A. Two Errors

1. That O.T. saints were members of the church. Israel rejected and God turned to the Gentiles (Isaiah 11:10; Romans 11:25).

2. Established at baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:16, 17). No charter; no members (no disciples yet called, so how could it be built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets?).

Consider the following study found on this website:
[THE DOCTRINE OF A PRE-PENTECOST CHURCH](#)

B. One Truth

Pentecost the only tenable position. The Holy Spirit is the former, comforter, administrator of spiritual gifts, teacher and guide, and power--how can all these function prior to Pentecost. No power and growth until after Pentecost.

III. The Organization of the Church

A. Universal Priesthood (I Peter 2:9)

All believers are priests

B. Saints (I Corinthians 1:2)

C. Apostles (I Corinthians 12:28; Galatians 1:1)

1. A view commonly espoused:

The Office was limited to 12 in Christ's day. One defected and was replaced. The view sees Paul as the replacement, rather than Matthias, considering the action of the Eleven erroneous, as they acted prior to Pentecost (Acts 1:15-26). There are no modern day apostles. Acts 1:22ff is applied to show the qualification of an apostle, yet denying that Matthias was legitimately elected to replace Judas. However, the passage also says an apostle must have companied with them from the baptism of John. Paul didn't. I Corinthians. 15 is referenced, "born out of due time," in an attempt to establish an exception to the requirement.

The concept of false apostles is cited (II Corinthians 11:13-15), to contend that no apostles exist today. The "Gift of apostle" (Ephesians 4), is fulfilled in Paul, and no longer operates.

2. The More Consistent View:

a-pos-tle (...-p¹/₄s"...l) n. **1.a. Apostle.** One of a group made up especially of the 12 disciples chosen by Jesus to preach the gospel. b. A missionary of the early Christian Church. c. A leader of the first Christian mission to a country or region.¹

The definitions quoted, though secular, distinguish between an Apostle in the lifetime of Christ, and one in the church program. Our modern day Missionary, Biblically, is an Apostle. The gift of Apostle stills operates, but in the context, definition, and identity of the local church. Whether we call them Apostles, or Missionaries, is not the point. The importance of the issue is to recognize that a spiritual gift must be possessed, in order to have the call of God upon one's life. The gift exercised by the missionary, is the gift of Apostle. Otherwise, in the church today, we have a ministry (i.e., missionary), without a listed spiritual gift, and a listed spiritual gift (i.e., Apostle), without an identifiable function.²

IV. The Mission of the Church

A. What it is:

1. To Glorify God--worship and walk
2. Build up the saints (Jude 20,21)
3. Fulfill Great Commission (Matthew 28:19,20)
 - a. Individually Preach the gospel to all (Mk 16:15)
 - b. Send Missionaries (Romans 10:13)

B. What it is not:

1. Not to win the whole world--those who are compelled to win the world so Christ can return.
2. Not to establish the kingdom--the social agenda.
3. Not to feed the world and help the poor
4. Not to rule over government

V. The Government of the Church

A. Papacy--ruled by one man, claiming to be the Vicar of Christ.

B. Episcopal--governed by a body of ruling bishops (Anglican, in England)

C. Presbyterian--member churches provide representatives for decision making.

D. Biblical:

1. Autonomy
2. Democracy (The Revelation 2:6, nicolaitanes, to conquer, i.e., the common people; I Peter 5:2,3; Galatians 3:28). Spirit led believer-priests are the decision makers, under the leadership (II Timothy 2:24) of the Pastor, under the authority of the Head, Christ.

VI. The Ordinances of the Church

No sacraments, which are dispensers of grace.

Two ordinances:

A. Baptism (Matthew 28:19; Acts 10:48). (Romans 6 is The Holy Spirit Baptism of I Corinthians 12:13, not water baptism.)

1. Mode: Immersion only (note the definition of Greek βαπτίζω).
2. Purpose: Not "unto" salvation, but "because" of salvation. It is a testimony to one's acceptance of the gospel. (New Testament church baptism properly begins in Acts 10.)³
3. Candidates: No infant baptism (Acts 8:37; Matthew 28:19,20--only disciples baptized). No time/waiting period, biblically, prescribed (Acts 8:37--if thou believest, thou mayest). However, that may

not rule out the practical need of establishing such a practice, as the subject is neither approved nor rejected, in Scripture.

4. Administration: Vested in New Testament church. Some cite Ethiopian Eunuch as example that baptism has nothing to do with church membership. But, such a position is not dispensationally ordered. New Testament "local church" baptism properly begins in Acts 10.

B. Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-29)

1. Symbolizes true meaning of the gospel
2. Provides a remembrance of Christ
3. Memorial to his death
4. Expresses the hope of the return of the resurrected Savior
5. Looks forward to the coming kingdom. (The professor believes the marriage supper to take place in heaven, yet declares here that the memorial shall next be observed by Christ in the kingdom, v. 29, not yet seeing the discrepancy.)
6. Partakers only qualified believers (saved, baptized and holy). I Corinthians 11:27 eliminates unbelievers and carnal Christians. Closed communion would violate the principle of the unity of the body of Christ.
7. Elements:
 - a. Unleavened bread
 - b. Unfermented grape juice (leaven represents sin). It is a matter of doctrine.
8. Constitution
 - a. Transubstantiation—Catholic doctrine.
 - b. Consubstantiation—Protestant doctrine.
 - c. Memorialization--symbols representing that sacrifice which one once made (Hebrews 10:10-14)—Baptist position, and others.
9. Frequency (I Corinthians. 11:26)

VII. The Discipline of the Church

- A. Defined (Galatians 6:1). It is not the same as chastisement, but rather the endeavor to maintain holy and acceptable behavior among the brethren. Chastisement is God's ending of the matter.
- B. The Basis (I Timothy 3:15; Acts 6; I Corinthians 5; I Peter 1:15,16)
- C. The Authority
 1. Not through civil courts (I Corinthians 6:1-8)

2. The Bible (II Timothy 3:17). Reproving, rebuking and exhorting (II Timothy 4:2; I Thessalonians 5:14; II Thessalonians 3:11-15).

D. The Goal--Restoration (Matthew 18:15-18). If will not be restored, then I Corinthians 5.

VIII. The Destiny of the Church

A. The Bridegroom's Coming

(Christ will not return for the church, He will come for it. One cannot return to something to which he has not come the first time. His "Return" will be when He comes back to the earth).

1. Secret. There is no indication that anyone will see Christ in the rapture, other than the participants (note the principle, in I Corinthians 15:6-8, and Matthew 27:53). All texts referring to everyone seeing Him, concern His Return, not the Rapture.

2. Personal (I Thessalonians 4:16,17)

3. Pretribulational (I Thessalonians 5:9; The Revelation 3:10)

4. Presentation (Ephesians 5:23-25)

5. Marriage of the Lamb (The Revelation 19:6-9)

Considered by most, as per the old premillennial position, to occur in Heaven, following the judgment of believers. The new position proposes that it will occur during the millennial kingdom, on earth, the preferred view.⁴

B. The Bridegroom's Presentation

C. The Marriage of the Lamb

D. The Home of the Church

¹ American Heritage Dictionary on computer.

² The reader is encouraged to obtain this author's work, entitled [Dispensational Distinctions](#), for a more thorough study of this subject.

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⁴ This, according to Matthew 25:1-13, the order of the Jewish wedding, use of the plural word in Greek, for marriage, indicating the marriage feasts, and the chronological order of events as stated in The Revelation 19:7-9.