

IX. ECCLESIOLOGY

A. Definition and Character of the Church

1. *Definition* - A church is the a local visible separated autonomous baptized called out assembly of believers with Biblical authority and directive to carry out the "great commission." The church is the body of Christ ^{Col 1:18}.
2. *Local* - The only church in the Bible is the local assembly¹ ^{Cor 11:18}. There is not one ounce of truth to the "universal" church theory. There never has been a church universal, and there never will be.
3. *Perpetual* - Since its establishment, there have always been churches extant with scriptural doctrine and practices. The church has never ceased to exist since its founding ^{Eph 3:21, Matt 16:18}.
4. *Separated* - Individual members, and the church as a unit, are to separate themselves from sin, false doctrine, those that propagate false doctrine, and the world ^{II Cor 6:17, II Thes 3:6, I Tim 6:5}.
5. *Foundation* - The Lord Jesus Christ is the founder and foundation of the local church ^{Matt 16:18}.
6. *Origin* - The church started during the Lord's ministry on this earth ^{Matt 16:18}. It was not in the Old Testament.
7. *Authorized* - The church gets its authority from the Bible, not from "apostolic succession" or church "genealogy" ^{Acts 14:23}.
8. *Espoused* - The relationship between a scriptural church and the Lord is that of an espoused bride ^{II Cor 11:2}.

B. Role and Responsibilities of the Church

1. *Doctrine* - The local church is charged with the protection and dissemination of true doctrine ^{I Tim 3:15}.
2. *Evangelism* - The task given to the churches is to go into all the world and preach the gospel, baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ^{Matt 28:19}. Benevolence and social action are not the church's principle task.
3. *Discipleship* - A church has the important responsibility of teaching its members continually and fervently ^{Acts 11:26}.
4. *Fellowship* - Assembling together in order to strengthen one another is also an important aspect of the church ^{Heb 10:25}.
5. *Collections* - The church is the place where giving is to take place; no other organization is a substitute ^{Acts 4:34}.
6. *Discipline* - The church is to separate itself from unruly brethren and those who teach false doctrine ^{Ro 16:17}. It is also responsible for differences between members ^{Mt 18:17-18}.
7. *Glory* - The purpose of the church is to glorify God ^{Eph 3:21}.

C. Government, Officers and Members of the Church

1. *Autonomy/Independence* - No entity (school, mission board, para-church organization, other church, etc.) is to stand between the local church and the Lord Jesus Christ. God does not convey His commands to His church thru a messenger ^{Rev 4:4-5}.
2. *Authority* - God gave authority to the church, not to the mission board, Bible college, para-church ministry, etc. The church is not to share any of its authority with anyone,

Col 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 might have the preeminence.

I Co 11:18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church . . .

Eph 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Matt 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

II Cor 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

2Th 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

ITi 6:5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

Ac 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

II Cor 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

I Tim 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Matt 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost

Acts 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Heb 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Acts 4:34 . . . as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, **35** And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Ro 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

Mat 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. **18** Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Rev 4:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; **5** And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood

- particularly these groups ^{Eph 3:10}.
3. *Head* - The Head of the church is the Lord ^{Eph 5:24}. He decides all matters pertaining to the local church ^{Eph 1:22-23}.
 4. *Two Officers* - The only two offices scripturally given in the church are that of pastor and deacon ^{Php 1:1}.
 5. *Pastors* - The pastor is the qualified overseer/guide of the church. There may be more than one in a given church. His office is also called elder and bishop. He must have only one wife, be blameless, etc. in accordance with the Bible ^{1 Tim 3:1-7}.
 6. *Deacons* - The deacon is the qualified servant in the church. His role is to serve in ancillary matters so that the pastor(s) may concentrate on the word and prayer ^{Acts 6:3-4}.
 7. *Members* - In order to be qualified for membership in a local church, one must be saved, baptized, and accepted into membership ^{Acts 2:47, Acts 2:41}.

D. Ordinances and Other Aspects of the Church

1. *Ordinances* - The only two "ordinances" given to the church by the Lord are baptism, and the Lord's supper.
2. *Baptism*
 - a. *Admission* - Baptism is the scriptural method of being added to a local church ^{Acts 2:41}.
 - b. *Symbolism* - Baptism does not wash away sins; it is a demonstration of our identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ ^{1 Pe 3:21}.
 - c. *Mode* - The Lord was immersed in water at His baptism, and we should be as well ^{Mark 1:10}.
 - d. *Recipients* - Only those persons who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as personal saviour are qualified to be baptized ^{Acts 8:36-37}.
3. *Lord's Supper*
 - a. *Purpose* - The Lord's Supper is that which He gave us to remember Him and His sacrifice until He returns ^{Lu 22:19}. It has nothing to do with salvation.
 - b. *Participants* - Only saved members (who are in fellowship with the Lord) of scriptural churches are allowed to partake in communion. The Bible does not prohibit interaction between churches in meetings and fellowship, and therefore does not prohibit "close" communion ^{Acts 20:11}.
 - c. *Elements* - Broken unleavened bread (representing Christ's broken body) and unfermented fruit of the vine (representing His incorruptible blood) are to be used in the Lord's supper ^{Mark 14:25}.
4. *Covenants* - The church is no substitute for Israel as concerning the Old Testament covenants. God will fulfill those covenants with Israel as promised ^{Heb 8:10}.
5. *Church and State* - The church has a distinct role from the state; these do not overlap. Church members are to submit to governmental authority while obeying God ^{Rom 13:1, Acts 5:29}. Churches are not obligated to pay taxes ^{Matt 17:26}.

Eph 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

Eph 5:24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Eph 1:22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, **23** Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Php 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons

1 Tim 3:1 ¶ This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. **2** A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; **3** Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; **4** One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; **5** (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) **6** Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. **7** Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Acts 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. **4** But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

1 Pe 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ

Mar 1:10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him

Acts 8:36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? **37** And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Lu 22:19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me

Acts 20:11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

Mr 14:25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people

Rom 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Matt 17:26 26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.