

Doctrinal Studies

The Church

1. The Local Church is the place for the dissemination of Spiritual Food for the souls of believers. 2 Pet. 3:18. It is to be a place of Growth, Learning, Concentration, Objectivity, Good Manners, and Silence during teaching. The local church is a school house for born-again believers.
2. The original churches met in homes. Acts 12:12; Rom. 16:5; ICor. 16:19; Col. 4:15. The church in Jerusalem met in homes. Three hundred years passed in the Church Age before buildings were constructed. The Church is not a building. A Church is born-again believers consistently receiving the communication of God's message.
3. The Church was established for the purpose of Spiritual advancement. This:
 - a. Requires academic discipline
 - b. Demands daily perception and hunger for Spiritual Food.
 - c. Necessitates stick ability and determination.
4. God has ordained that there be a Shepherd-Teacher for the local congregation. His responsibility is tremendous. The response of the flock should be a fantastic one.
5. When a congregation has grown consistently over a period of years other forms of worship will be manifested:
 - a. Grace Orientation
 - b. Gratitude
 - c. Witnessing
 - d. Giving
 - e. Teaching
 - f. Service

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6. The word “Church” (*ekklesia*) is used in the scriptures five ways:
 - a. Citizens gathering for state affairs. In Acts 19:25, 29, 32 people met to care for political affairs; legislative meetings.
 - b. In the Old Testament, the word was used for the assembly of Israel. Acts 7:38
 - c. There is a reference to the Synagogue as the *ekklesia* in Matt. 18:17. Jews met for worship. The Church actually did not exist at that time.
 - d. The Body of Christ is made up of all believers. This is the Church Universal revealed in Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:25-27; Col. 1:17, 18.
 - e. The Church is also used to mean a local group. This is the geographical, visible Church made up of believers and unbelievers. 1Cor. 1:2; Rev. 2, 3.
7. The Church began on the Day of Pentecost and terminates with the Rapture. 1Thess. 4:13-18; IJohn 3:1, 2; John 14:1-3.
8. The Mystery character of the Church is depicted in the Epistles. Eph. 3:1-6; Col. 1:25, 26; Rom. 16:25, 26. Mystery does not mean unknown but hidden in the past (OT period) but now revealed. The first prophecy of the Church came from Jesus when He said: “*Upon this Rock, I will build my Church.*” The future tense (Matt. 16:18) says that the Church did not exist when Christ spoke these words. The active voice reveals that Jesus Christ produced the action; therefore there was not Church in Abraham’s tent. That concept is a confusion of the Age of Israel and the Age of the Church.
9. Born-again Jews on the day of Pentecost were placed in Union with Jesus Christ and baptized with the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:5; John 7:39. It was not until the departure of Christ that the Church actually began.
10. The Church Age ends with the Rapture of the Royal Family. 1Thess. 4:13-18, Col. 2:14-15, compared to Rev. 19:6-8, Zech. 13:2, IThess. 3:13. These verses show that at the Second Advent the Church will come back to the earth with Christ. For the Church to do this it had to be in Heaven. This reveals that the Church cannot

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be in the Tribulation and Heaven at the same time. At the end of the Church Age the Bride, in resurrected body, will be glorified just as at the beginning of the Church Age, Christ in resurrected body was glorified.

11. Character of the Church – Distinctives:

- a. Permanent Union with Christ. Every person who accepts Jesus Christ as Savior is baptized into the family of God. This is our position in Christ as in Rom. 6:3, 8 and 8:38-39. This did not happen before the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5). This makes Christianity an eternal relationship, a personal relationship to God and not a religion. Gal. 3:26, Eph. 1:5-6. *Churchanity* is not Christianity. Judaism is not Christianity.
- b. Universal indwelling of Christ. Jn. 15:5. Jesus spoke of the time when He would be in His own. Jn. 14:18, 23. What is the purpose of His indwelling? He indwells for the purpose of Fellowship. That fellowship can only be realized by the FHS. We are not taught or guided apart from His Spirit and Word!
- c. Universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Rom. 8:9, Gal. 3:2; 4:6. The Holy Spirit did not permanently indwell Christians before Pentecost. He empowered some to carry out certain tasks. Every Christian is God's dwelling place on the earth. We are *PORTABLE "SANCTUARIES"* – I Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19-20. The Church is not a Sanctuary; rather – *frail, sinful, obnoxious believers* – but they're sanctuaries just the same. This should overwhelm us. We should rejoice in *HIS GRACE* and *LOVE*. Yet what a grave responsibility. *WHAT KIND OF A HOME DO I FURNISH THE INDWELLING DIVINE PRESENCE?*
- d. Universal Priesthood of the Believer. 1Pet 2:5, 9 tells us that God has chosen us to be a Royal Priesthood. We are children of God, members of the Royal family. We have stepped into a privileged place – the place the Israelites forfeited. As Priests we have a function. The Israelites had to approach God through a specialized priesthood. With our sins named we can come to God at any time without going through a bishop, priest or minister. Heb. 13:15.
- e. We have a completed canon of Scripture. By 96 A.D. The inspired writings were consummated.

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- f. Another distinctive of the Church age is a supernatural way of life. James 4:7; Gal. 5:16; Co. 2:6. The Christian walk requires the power of the HS and SFRIS. Our efforts of the flesh cannot please God. Rom. 7:18; 8:8-9.
- g. In the Church Age we are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Eph. 5:18. The Filling of Holy spirit is a *must* for: *GROWTH* (1Cor. 2:9-12); *EFFECTIVE WITNESSING* (Rom. 5:8, Gal. 5:22); *EFFECTIVE PRAYER* (Eph. 6:18, James 5:16b); *GLORIFYING CHRIST* (John 16:14).

12. Synonyms for the Church:

- a. The last Adam and the new Creation. Gal. 6:15; 2Cor. 5:17.
- b. The head and the body. Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:16; 4:4, 5; 5:23.
- c. The shepherd and the sheep. John 10; Heb. 13:20.
- d. The vine and the branches. John 15:1.
- e. The Chief Corner Stone and the stones of the building. Eph. 2:20; IPet. 2:4-8.
- f. The High-Priesthood of Christ and the Royal Priesthood of the believer in the Church Age. Heb. 7:25; 10:10-14; IPet. 2:5, 9.