



Bible Doctrines IV - Survey

The New Testament Church

I. THE CHURCH DEFINED

A. Biblical Usage

1. Church (seventy-seven times)
2. Churches (thirty-seven times)

B. Varying Views of the Church

1. The church is a building.
 - a. The word *church* is used to denote both a Christian association of people and a place of worship.
 - b. Therefore, the church is a house consecrated to the worship of God, among Christians—the Lord’s house.
 - c. This concept is derived from verses like 1 Timothy 3:15.
2. The church consists of a local body of believers. The church consists of a body of baptized believers who have banded together to fully perform the teachings of scripture.
3. The church is made up of all the saved.
 - a. The church is the collective body of all who have been born again.
 - (1) In this sense, the church is sometimes called *universal*.
 - (2) It is often broken down to a “visible” and “invisible” church.
 - (3) On a smaller scale, the church can consist of the saved in a particular locale (i.e., the church of Ephesus, or of Antioch).
 - b. The visible church, also known as the local church, consists of those who have believed on the Lord and assemble together.
 - c. The invisible, or universal, church consists of the whole number of born-again believers.

C. Scriptural References to a “Church”

1. In the wilderness (Acts 7:37-38)
2. The earthly ministry of Christ (Matthew 18:17; Hebrews 2:10-13)
3. After the ascension of Christ (Acts 2:47; Acts 20:28)
4. The church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:22-23)

D. The Local Church Versus a Universal Church

1. Examining the scriptures: local or universal?
 - a. The *church* the Lord would build (Matthew 16:18)
 - b. The *church* to which the Lord would add (Acts 2:47)
 - c. The *church* assembling with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 11:26)



- d. The *church* praying for Peter (Acts 12:5)
 - e. The *churches* where elders were ordained (Acts 14:23)
 - f. The *church* gathered to hear a spiritual report (Acts 14:27)
 - g. The *churches* confirmed (Acts 15:41)
 - h. The *churches* established in the faith (Acts 16:5)
 - i. The *church* to be fed by elders (Acts 20:28)
 - j. The *church* in the house of Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:5)
 - k. The *church* hosted by Gaius (Romans 16:23)
 - l. The *church* of God at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2)
 - m. The *church* of God (1 Corinthians 10:32)
 - n. The *church* together in one place (1 Corinthians 14:23)
 - o. The *churches* of the saints (1 Corinthians 14:33)
 - p. The *churches* of Galatia (1 Corinthians 16:1)
 - q. The *church* of God (Galatians 1:13)
 - r. The *church* over which Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 5:23)
 - s. The *church* giving glory to the Lord (Ephesians 3:21)
 - t. The *church* to be subject unto Christ (Ephesians 5:24)
 - u. The *church* Christ loved (Ephesians 5:25)
 - v. The *church* to be presented to Christ (Ephesians 5:27)
 - w. The *church* which is Christ's body (Colossians 1:18, 24)
 - x. The *church* of the Laodiceans (Colossians 4:16)
 - y. The *church* of God (1 Timothy 3:5)
 - z. The *church* of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15)
 - aa. The *church* in Philemon's house (Philemon 1:2)
 - bb. The *church* having elders who were to go and pray over the sick (James 5:14)
 - cc. The *church* that is at Babylon (1 Peter 5:13)
 - dd. The *church* witnessing Gaius' charity (3 John 1:6)
 - ee. The *churches* in Asia (Revelation 1:4, 11, 20)
2. Concluding thoughts
- a. The local church
 - (1) The majority of references to a church or to churches in the New Testament speak of a local body of believers.
 - (2) Varying numbers are given, but many agree that at least ninety references are to a local or to multiple local bodies of believers.
 - b. The universal church
 - (1) Some refuse to believe in a universal body of believers, but rather refer to debatable scripture references as generic.
 - (2) There are, however, some verses that identify the "church" as all who are saved.
 - c. The balance
 - (1) The local church
 - a) The focus of the New Testament is on a local visible body of believers.
 - b) The apostle Paul had no trouble calling the believers at Corinth, "the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27).



- c) The Lord does His work in and through this means throughout the New Testament.
- d) The concept of parachurch ministries are unscriptural and should not be associated with biblical Christianity.
- (2) The universal church
 - a) This is mentioned in the New Testament, but is such a minority that it is obviously not intended to demonstrate God's emphasis in this age.
 - b) We know that it is viable, because just as Paul called the church at Corinth "the body of Christ", he also included himself in that body (1 Corinthians 12:13) and he was certainly not a member at Corinth.
 - c) This body has not met, nor will it meet until gathered in heaven. Technically, it then becomes a local assembly.

II. THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH

A. Varying Views of the Church's Origins

- 1. The church began in the Old Testament
 - a. Source
 - (1) This is taught by many reformed or covenant theologians.
 - (2) This idea claims that there is a line of God's people throughout mankind's history and that these people make up the church.
 - b. Outcome—If this be the case, the church has no New Testament significance, is made up of the elect/saved of all ages, and takes Israel's place and becomes the beneficiary of Israel's promises.
- 2. The church began during the ministry of Christ
 - a. Source
 - (1) This view was taught by many early Baptists.
 - (2) Even today, many Bible believing Christians hold to this view.
 - b. Arguments
 - (1) The principle of the church was established (Matthew 16:18; Matthew 18:20).
 - (2) It had a Head—Jesus Christ (Matthew 23:8).
 - (3) It had a pastor—Jesus Christ (John 10:11, 14).
 - (4) Discipline was enacted (Matthew 18:15-17).
 - (5) Baptism was established (Matthew 28:16-20).
 - (6) The Lord's supper was established (Matthew 26:26-29).
 - (7) Christ sang praises in the church (Psalm 22:22; Hebrews 2:12; Mark 14:26).
 - (8) The church was commissioned (Matthew 28:16-20).
 - c. Outcome
 - (1) Everything in the gospel accounts is applicable to the New Testament church.
 - (2) John's baptism is often viewed as no different than the present baptism offered to the newborn babe in Christ.



3. The church began at Pentecost
 - a. Source—This is the view held by most moderate dispensationalists.
 - b. Arguments
 - (1) There could be no church in the world until Christ's death to redeem the church with His blood.
 - (2) There could be no church in the world until Christ arose from the dead to provide the church with resurrection life.
 - (3) There could be no church until the advent of the Holy Ghost.
 - c. Outcome
 - (1) The body present in the early chapters of the book of Acts is not the same body as was present during Christ's earthly ministry.
 - (2) Although some truths from the gospel accounts certainly carry over to the New Testament church, it is not guaranteed.
 - (3) It is possible and likely that some of the truths revealed after the ascension of Christ were unknown during the earthly ministry of Christ and before.
4. The church began during the ministry of the apostle Paul
 - a. Source
 - (1) This view is held by many who would be considered hyper-dispensationalists.
 - (2) Some who hold to this view also go so far as to say that water baptism is not an ordinance to be maintained for the church.
 - b. Arguments—from *A Dispensational Theology* by Charles Baker
 - (1) There was already a church in existence at Pentecost, but this was not the body of Christ.
 - (2) The phrase, "the church which is his body," is only used by Paul. When he uses that phrase, he is implying that there is another church which is not Christ's body.
 - (3) Pentecost primarily, if not exclusive, dealt with Israel.
 - (4) Paul declared that it was because of the blinding of Israel that his message of reconciliation had been sent to the Gentiles, but at Pentecost Israel had not yet been blinded.
 - (5) Not only was Israel not blinded at Pentecost, but it is here that we find the first real offer of the kingdom to Israel. It was because of their rejection of the King and the kingdom that a new dispensation under Paul was ushered in.
 - (6) The body of Christ is a joint-body of Jews and Gentiles, but at Pentecost there is no mention of the Gentiles.
 - (7) At Pentecost, the believers received water baptism for the remission of sins. There is no record that Paul ever practiced baptism for this purpose.
 - c. Outcome
 - (1) Water baptism and the Lord's supper may not be applicable to the New Testament church, but rather are viewed as Jewish.
 - (2) The early chapters of Acts do not apply to the New Testament church seeing that it was a mystery until Paul revealed it.



B. Considering a Dual Blessing

1. A future church (Matthew 16:18)—When Christ gave His promise concerning the church, He described the church as being future.
2. A present church (Matthew 18:15-17; Hebrews 2:12)
 - a. The Lord spoke of a church as though it was present tense (Matthew 18:15-17). This would suggest that there was a church in existence during the Lord's earthly ministry.
 - b. It would seem as though the Lord sang praise in the church (Hebrews 2:12).
 - c. Apparently, even while the Lord was promising to build a church, there was already a church in existence.

C. The Scriptural Origin of the Church

1. The announcement of the church (Matthew 16:18)
 - a. I will
 - (1) I—demonstrates the responsibility for bringing this church to pass is fully laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (2) Will—demonstrates it was yet future, but certain to come to pass.
 - b. Build—demonstrates how the church would come to be. It must be built, and it must be built by the Lord Himself.
 - c. My church—demonstrates possession. The “church” mentioned here cannot be any “church” until the Lord owned it.
2. The building of the church
 - a. The Lord said He would build His church.
 - b. The building of Christ's church was connected to His death.
 - (1) Jesus Christ was the “chief corner stone.”
 - a) He was prophesied as a stone in the Old Testament (Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14; Isaiah 28:16)
 - b) The Lord dealt with this in the New Testament as a truth that was connected to His rejection and crucifixion (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17-18).
 - c) Simon Peter connected it to the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus (Acts 4:11).
 - d) Paul declared Christ to be the foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), and said Christ was the chief corner stone of the one body of Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:20).
 - e) Peter declared that we came to this stone and when we did we became a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:1-8).
 - (2) Jesus Christ was its builder.
 - c. The association of Christ's death to the building of His church is demonstrated in the context of Matthew chapter 16.
 - (1) The announcement of the church (Matthew 16:18)
 - (2) The giving of the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:19-20)
 - (3) The announcement of the crucifixion (Matthew 16:21-23)



3. The purchase of the church
 - a. The New Testament church is Christ's—"my church" (Matthew 16:18).
 - b. It would have become His by a purchase.
 - (1) The "church of God" was purchased by Christ's blood (Acts 20:28).
 - (2) We are redeemed by His blood (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).
 - (3) Our eternal redemption was taken care of when the blood was placed on the mercy seat in heaven (Hebrews 9:12-14).
 - (4) The Holy Ghost is the earnest of that purchase (Ephesians 1:14).
4. The growth of the church (1 Corinthians 13:11-13)
 - a. Infancy
 - (1) Preaching only to Jews
 - (2) Preaching the baptism of John
 - (3) Sign gifts
 - b. Childhood
 - (1) Sign gifts
 - (2) Began to reach out to Gentiles
 - c. Maturity
 - (1) Sign gifts ceased
 - (2) Jew and Gentiles in one body
 - (3) The focus on faith, hope, and charity
5. The beginning of the New Testament
 - a. The mediator of the testament (Hebrews 9:15)
 - b. The offering of the testament (Hebrews 9:16-17)
 - (1) The testament was present (Hebrews 9:16).
 - (2) The testament was prepared while the testator lived (Hebrews 9:17).
 - c. The effect of the testament (Hebrews 9:16-17)
 - (1) The death of the testator was necessary (Hebrews 9:16)
 - (2) The testament was of force after the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:17).
 - d. The dedication of the testament (Hebrews 9:18)
6. Conclusion
 - a. A church (congregation) was present during the earthly ministry of Christ (Matthew 18:17; Hebrews 2:12).
 - b. This could not, however, have been the New Testament church as the New Testament was not in effect until the death of Christ.
 - c. The church could not be rightfully called "my church" by Christ until He purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28).
 - d. This did not happen until Christ sprinkled His blood on the mercy seat in heaven, which likely took place between John 20:17 and Matthew 28:9.
 - e. We know the New Testament church began no later than Pentecost, when the Lord was said to have "added" to the church (Acts 2:47).
 - f. This would narrow the beginning of the New Testament church down to sometime between John 20:17 and Acts 2:47.