

Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology

With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including God's
Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity

Lesson 7: Ecclesiology—The Doctrine of the Church (Abridged Overview)
What or who is the church; and What is its purpose?

Abridged Overview for Class Lecture/Discussion

Note: Highlighted subjects are the minimum to be addressed in classes with time constraints.
Ask the class to read the overview prior to the class meeting.

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Remember where Ecclesiology fits
within systematic theology.

Review the logic of the loci in the next slides.

Before Looking at the Next Slide...

Let's say together the six loci of historic Christian systematic theology. To help us start, what is the necessary first one from whom the others come?

The Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

1. **Theology:** What the Bible Reveals about God
2. **Anthropology:** What the Bible Reveals about Mankind
3. **Christology:** What the Bible Reveals about Jesus Christ
4. **Soteriology:** What the Bible Reveals about Salvation (This doctrine is also called **Pneumatology** and **The Application of Christ's Redemption**, What the Bible Reveals about the Holy Spirit, the key agent in applying Christ's redemption for our salvation)
5. **Ecclesiology:** What the Bible Reveals about the Church
6. **Eschatology:** What the Bible Reveals about the Last Things or The End Times

The Integration of the Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

The Logic of the System and a Summary of the Six Main Doctrines of the Bible

- 1. Theology:** Everything starts with God. Essential aspects of God include his triune being; that he is creator; owner; most holy, righteous, and just, such that nothing unholy ever enters his presence; steadfast love to the core of his being; and for his being completely perfect in every way.
- 2. Anthropology:** God created humans perfect, even to a limited extent in his image, but the first ones disobeyed God; this sin, which has resulted in cosmic disharmony, so corrupted themselves and their posterity that we cannot come into God's presence and have eternal life without his help. In love, God gave his law to teach his will, his plan of restoration, and to restrain sin to prevent chaos in the now sinful and evil world. What's his plan?
- 3. Christology:** Since God is love, he is unwilling to destroy sinful humans who bear his image, but to preserve his holiness, righteousness, and justice, he instituted his plan to have one perfect human being represent all others, fulfill all the law, and credit that righteousness to all people who believe in and follow him. To accomplish God's perfect will for human beings, that one righteous human also had to be divine; the only One who could fulfill all God's law is his only begotten Son, the Redeemer, Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, who did so in his First Coming to earth in his life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. The whole Bible focuses on Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus, and only Jesus (John 14:6), makes salvation, living forever in the presence of God, possible. How?
- 4. Soteriology:** This explanation of salvation explains how the Third Person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, applies the redemption and salvation Christ has provided to all individuals who believe in and follow Jesus.
- 5. Ecclesiology:** This doctrine explains how God calls out, sets apart, brings together, and equips those whom he has redeemed in a new (i.e., renewed) covenant, the church, all those from every race and nation, to work together to most effectively bring to and implement the Good News of salvation throughout the whole world.
- 6. Eschatology:** When the time is right in God's sight, he will bring the present age to a conclusion and restore his original plan in a new (i. e., renewed) heaven and new (renewed) earth. How he has already begun to do so, is seen in what the Bible reveals about the Last Things, or The End Times, including what occurs when we die and what occurs at the end of history, when Christ Jesus returns in his Second Coming.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

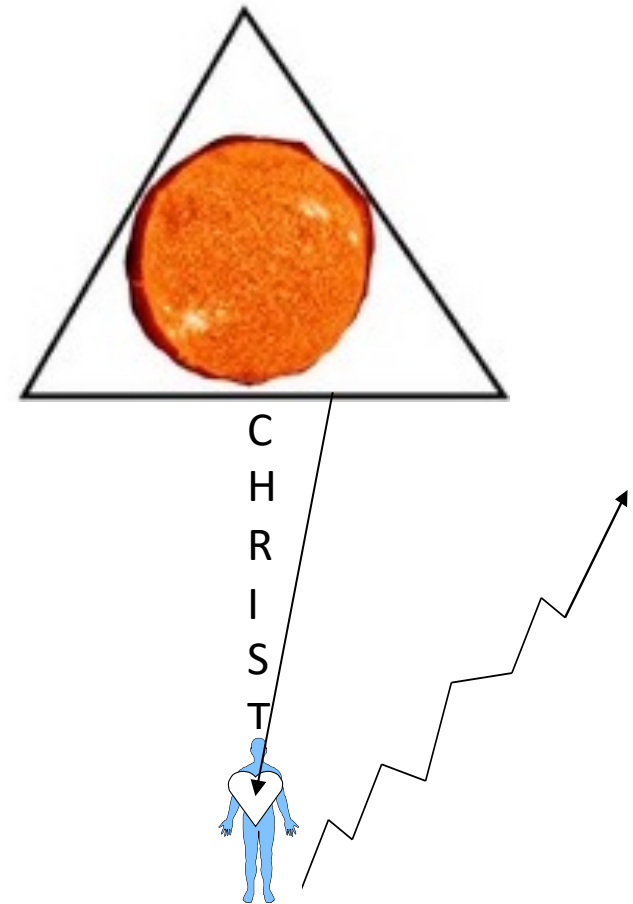
Ecclesiology is the study of all the Bible teaches about the church (< Greek: ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*) = assembly, congregation, church < ἐκ (*ek*) = from, out of, away from + καλέω (*kaleō*) = call, name, summon, invite = literally, the ones called out by the Lord, those saved individuals who are called out by God to be holy, i.e., separated to him, and gathered together as his church. The church is the entity God employs as the main means through whom he works to accomplish his redemption of his creation. The church is both an organism, the body of Christ consisting of his believers united in and called to serve God, and an organization, as the many individuals organize to accomplish with planned purpose what they could not do individually. Through Holy Spirit-guided worship, learning, and nurture, the church grows more Christ-like and serves the Lord ever more effectively in the mission God has given it to bring the Good News of redemption and reconciliation with God to every nation, tribe, people, and language, for it is God's will that all come into his Kingdom. (Revelation 7:7; 1 Timothy 2:4) The church sometimes has people in its communion who are not Christians and others who are Christians but so immature, stuck in an elementary stage of sanctification, that the congregation must be vigilant to lovingly establish certain limits, e.g., with the sacraments, and, when necessary, employ the Biblical use of church discipline. This section comprises highlights, implications, and very practical applications of the Biblical doctrine of Ecclesiology.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The church is the primary means through whom God is working to accomplish his redemptive purposes and is especially helpful in discerning the will of God. He has given us the Bible through both the Old Testament church and the New Testament church, though since the end of the first century A.D., he is no longer giving any new revelation. He not only helps us directly through the Holy Spirit and his Word but also indirectly through others. Involving others, he primarily uses fellow believers whom the Bible calls the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 12:5; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:12; Colossians 1:18,24) to guide us.

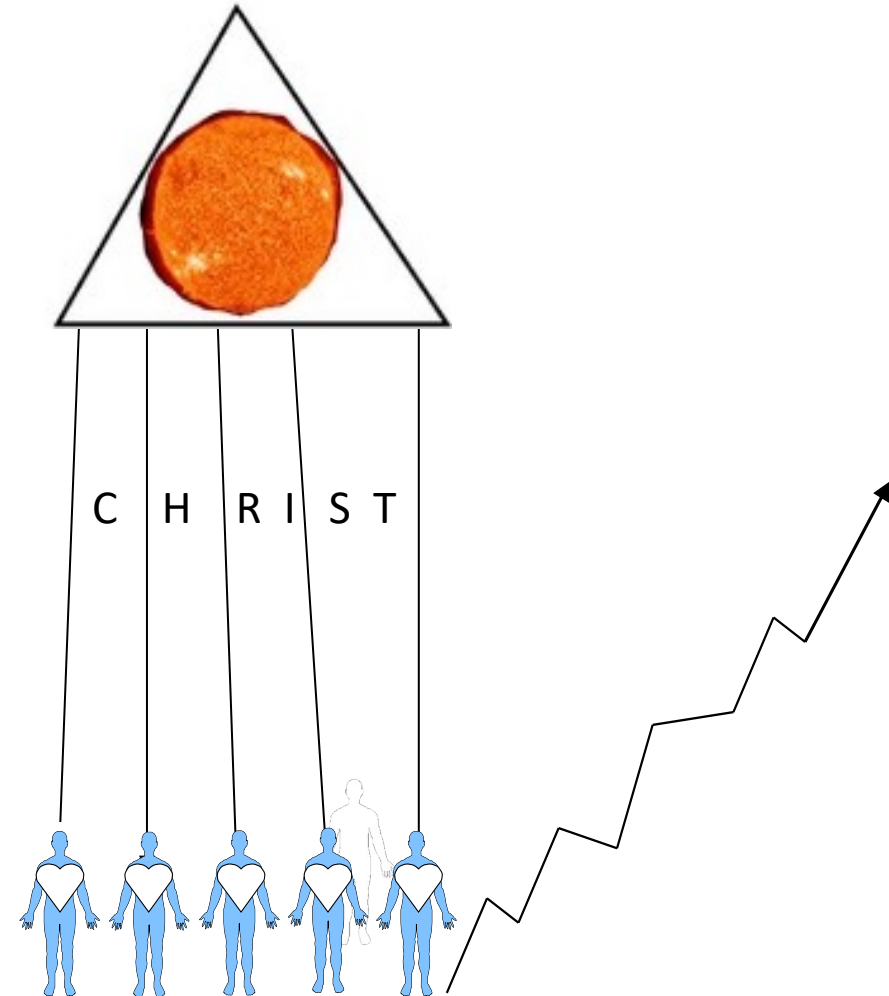
Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

- Recall the fourth doctrine, the fourth main theme in God's plan of redemption, taught in the Bible is called by three different terms:
 1. Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation
 2. Pneumatology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit
 3. The application of Christ's redemption
- All three terms are accurate, for all describe the work of the Holy Spirit, the main agent in the process of making Christ's redemptive work operative in the lives of human beings.



Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

- In order to accomplish more corporately than could be done individually, God calls his saved people who are being sanctified to work together in a great global mission, to be the main means through whom he will accomplish his plan of redeeming his creation through Christ Jesus.
- Four important distinctions about the church should be remembered.
 1. The church is the visible manifestation of the covenant God made with Abraham.
 2. The church is both militant and triumphant.
 3. The church is both visible and invisible.
 4. The church is both an organism and an organization.



Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.” (Genesis 17:7)
- “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29, esp. v. 29)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. The church is the visible manifestation of the covenant God made with Abraham. This is why some Biblical scholars use the word Church also in the OT, e.g., in Calvin's commentary on Genesis 17:7. He writes, “as soon as it was said, ‘I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee,’ the Church was separated from the other nations.”
 - a. The word covenant is another example of what Biblical scholars call a major motif, or theme, a doctrine that runs throughout the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments. The most common Hebrew word for covenant, בְּרִית (berît), occurs 286 times in the Old Testament and as διαθήκη (diathēkē) 33 times in the Greek New Testament. On numerous other occasions, references occur to covenants and covenantal relationships apart from the use of the word covenant.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.” (Genesis 17:7)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. The church is the visible manifestation of the covenant God made with Abraham.
 - b. When God tells us something over 300 times, we can conclude he's trying to get our attention, right?!
 - c. Do you recall your mother telling you, and have you said to your children, “How many times have I told you...?!”
 - d. The covenant is a key to understanding the meaning of God's revelation, but many Christians, including dispensationalists (*op cit.*), ignore this key teaching and its implications.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.” (Genesis 17:7)
- “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29, esp. v. 29)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- e. The unity and connection between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church is seen very clearly in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament Hebrew, which was the Bible that Jesus and the early church used, “the holy Scriptures” to which Paul refers in 2 Timothy 3:15. In the Septuagint the Greek word, ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*), meaning assembly, congregation, church, and translated church in the New Testament, is used to translate the Hebrew word, קָהָל (*qāhāl*), assembly, congregation some 100 times throughout the Old Testament.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "'The time is coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...³³' This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the LORD. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.³⁴ ...' For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'" (Jeremiah 31:31-34)
- "'This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.' [Quote from Jeremiah 31:33] ¹⁷Then he adds: 'Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.' [Quote from Jeremiah 31:34] ¹⁸And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.'" (Hebrews 10:16-18)
- "Therefore He [Jesus] is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25 NASB)
- "Jesus...now crowned with glory and honor, because he suffered death...for everyone." (Hebrews 2:9)
- See also Matthew 28:18-20; Genesis 12:3; Revelation 7:9.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- f. While the main covenant throughout the Bible, the covenant God made with Abraham, is "an everlasting covenant" (Genesis 17:7; Matthew 5:18), Christ has made it a *καινός* (*kainos*, new) covenant by fulfilling the purpose of the old covenant, which no one else could do, and thereby forever bringing us, who believe in and follow him, into the covenant and granting to us the covenant blessings together with the covenant responsibilities.
 - 1) Jesus' once for all sacrifice of himself to redeem us for our sins, replaced the old covenant repeated sacrifices of bulls and goats that were not sufficient to forgive our sins and only foreshadowed Jesus' all-sufficient sacrifice that is credited to us by our faith. (Rom. 4) The sacrifice of animals was preparatory, temporary, and insufficient, because it was humans that sinned and thus humans needed to make reparation for their sins, but only a perfect, sinless, human could do so to satisfy God's righteous wrath against sin. Only Jesus, being both human and divine, was able to make the perfect sacrifice, doing so vicariously, substituting for us.
 - 2) Jesus' sacrifice in the new covenant is all that is needed and makes possible our entry into the presence of God.
 - 3) Jesus' work and his sending of the Holy Spirit to make it effective in our lives enables us to be God's children and to accomplish the original mission of the old covenant. (Genesis 12:3; Matthew 28:18-20; Rev. 7:9)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” (Genesis 1:1-2)
- “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.” (Acts 2:1 NIV)
- “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.” Acts 2:1 (KJV)
- “Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.” (Revelation 4:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- g. We have further Biblical evidence that the church was not born at Pentecost. Acts 2:1 uses a rare and important Greek word, not well translated in many new versions of the New Testament: συμπληρώω (*sumplēroō*) = fill completely, become entirely full, complete. With New Testament scholar, R.C.H. Lenski, the verse is better translated, “And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled.” The King James Version translates the verse more accurately than most newer versions. Thus, we see the link with the rest of Scripture, in particular the immediate context in the beginning of Acts, and the entire Old Testament. The Holy Spirit did not just arrive in the first century A.D.; he’s been everywhere from the beginning. (Review [Theology](#) and [Soteriology](#).)

The number 12 in apocalyptic literature, the genre in which Revelation was written, refers to the church (e.g., 12 apostles) in the NT and also in the OT to the 12 tribes. The number 24 refers graphically to the unity of the OT church and the NT church.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.” (Acts 2:1 NIV)
- ‘And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.’ Acts 2:1 (KJV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- h. Thus, Pentecost is not the church’s birthday.
 - 1) The church is not being birthed on the day of Pentecost, but rather empowered (cf. the context of the passage, e.g., Acts 1:8) and equipped, thus Christ is strengthening his still emotionally beaten up and timid post-crucifixion disciples by sending the Holy Spirit to give his church what they needed to “get the job done” in accord with their, indeed our, high and holy calling.
 - 2) This reality about the church is very important for many reasons, not the least of which is to help dispensationalists understand that this is not a new, a church, age; the church has been in existence since Abraham.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.” (Acts 2:1 NIV)
- ‘And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.’ Acts 2:1 (KJV)
- “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- i. In Ephesians 5:25 we read that “Christ loved the church...” If the church didn’t begin until Pentecost, how likely is it that Paul would say Christ loved [Greek aorist, past, tense] her?” The context of the passage indicates he is not speaking in a vision of the future.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.” (Exodus 19:6)
- “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)
- “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- k. These and many other Bible passages are the basis of the church’s mission to witness for God’s plan of salvation in Jesus Christ, a witness that is done in many ways, individually and corporately.
 - 1) Individuals engage, e.g., in private or group conversations (1 Peter 3:15) as Christ’s witnesses or evangelists.
 - It is important to distinguish between witnessing and evangelism.

Ecclesiology: The Mission of the Church

The Mission of the Church Conducted Individually and Corporately Distinguishing between Witnessing and Evangelism

Two Means of Lovingly Proclaiming the Good News about Jesus Christ

Individual Mission: Witnessing

1. Witnessing is communicating about Jesus Christ, which all believers in Christ are called to do. (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15)
2. While the verbal aspect of witnessing can be facilitated by conversational gambits, Scripture indicates a witness for Christ is usually passive until requested, a response to the query of others, typically as they observe the difference between our lifestyle and that of the world and ask us why. (1 Peter 2:9-12; 3:15)
3. Witnessing is done largely on an individual basis, where a believer explains his or her faith in Christ to one or more others in conversation, typically and especially effectively within relationships.

Individual Mission: Evangelism

1. Evangelism is a gift of the Spirit that some but not all believers receive. (Ephesians 4:11) This understanding relieves guilt in those who feel pressure to be assertive in proclamation of the Gospel of Christ but who don't have the gift of evangelism.
2. Evangelism, as seen in the Bible and in those throughout church history who have been given the gift, is a proactive initiative by individuals.
3. Yet individuals often do so in dyads (cf. Luke 10:1, 17). When done in larger groups (e.g., small groups, Vacation Bible School, and other outreach programs, even large groups as in the crusades many lead), the work is seen to be part of the corporate mission of the church.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.” (Exodus 19:6)
- “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you....” (Jeremiah 29:7 NASB)
- “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)
- “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9)
- “Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.” (Mark 13:11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- k. These and many other Bible passages are the basis of the church’s mission to witness for God’s plan of salvation in Jesus Christ, a witness that is done in many ways, individually and corporately.
 - 1) **Individuals engage, e.g., in private or group conversations. (1 Peter 3:15)**
 - a) See the discussion that follows this slide.
 - b) **We are also to engage the public square. See Jeremiah 29:7** and the related slides that follow.
 - 2) **Corporate missions** are widespread, e.g.,
 - a) local church food pantries for poor people and their families.
 - b) local councils of churches to provide shelter, counseling, and education for homeless people and their families.
 - c) denominational programs, such as Thrivent. (financial management)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

DISCUSS: How can we witness most effectively for Jesus Christ in personal interactions with others? Include the following in the conversation.

1. In conversations always be looking for comments people make that we can use as a catalyst for mentioning a word for Christ. For example, if someone expresses worry or concern, offer a reply such as, "I've had those struggles too; however, I'd like to say that what helps me in that situation is knowing that the Lord Jesus Christ is sovereign, that he loves us, and that he can and does help us." (Refer to passages such as John 16:33.) If the other person indicates interest in what you have said, tell him or her more about Christ. Ask him or her if he or she has any questions about the Lord. If no interest is indicated, take pleasure in your attempt to be Christ's witness and that you have the assurance that you have given the other person vital words to think about and a catalyst the Holy Spirit will use to work in that person's mind and heart and upon which the Spirit will build, e.g., through another's comments. As God has said, his word will not return to him void. (Isaiah 55:11)
2. During your conversation, pray mentally that God will guide you as to what to say and not say, what to do and not do.
3. Don't feel obligated to press for an answer in your initial conversation. If you have the opportunity, you might say, "What do you think about this good news?"

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

4. Communicating within a relationship helps us witness for the Lord. A relationship involves friendship and trust, which facilitates communication on important subjects. The Navigators mission organization in their July 2019 issue, *Discipleship Resources*, included an article entitled, "Redefining Evangelism," in which they referred to research by the Barna Group. The article said, "The *Barna Group* recently released a fascinating report on how adults respond to evangelism. Among the findings, adults preferred faith interactions sparked out of sincere engagement rather than depersonalized outreach efforts. The takeaway? Nonbelievers are most receptive to faith conversations when they occur in the context of genuine relationship...the world is filled with millions of people who are on a spiritual journey. Many are not yet ready to attend church or make a decision to follow Christ, but they are open to relationships and to making small decisions that will move them closer to Christ." (The Navigators <email@navigators.org> July 2, 2019) This reality thus also applies to witnessing for Christ. Try to develop relationships whenever possible, as with a relative, neighbor, or coworker. Look for opportunities to speak a good word for the Lord and how he helps you. Ask the person if he or she has a church home; if not, ask if he or she would like to visit your church home with you.
5. Look at the brief but very helpful videos church educator, Jim Found, has provided on his Website at www.foundbytes.com that offer valuable and practical tips on effective witnessing for Christ.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

Part of our witness should be engaging the public square pertaining to issues that affect the welfare of the city where God has sent us. (Jeremiah 29:7) We must remember that we are in a spiritual warfare with Satan and his demons. (Ephesians 6:10-18 and Revelation 12-20) Jesus said we are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:13-16) We are to speak the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15) Many other passages in God’s Word indicate his will that we do all we can to promote the good and oppose the evil in the society in which we live.

When we are opposed with false accusations, e.g., “You can’t force me/us to believe and do this...,” we can explain that neither we nor God want to force them to obey his will. First, our Biblical theology and anthropology (*op cit.*) reveal that God has built into us his image, part of which is a limited but genuine freedom that he respects. He wills that we obey him out of love, not constraint.

Second, in the light of Revelation 22:11-15, and related passages, we can prove that we’re not trying to force anyone to do anything. Nevertheless, we must say that while God gives freedom for people to disobey, doing so will harm them sooner and later, and they will not be able to do it in his kingdom. Due to God’s great love and holiness, he will not allow them to corrupt heaven or the new heaven and the new earth. If people choose to sin and do evil, they will do it in a place without God’s presence. He will make sure of that at the final judgment. We should also forewarn them, as we have opportunity, that without God’s presence and without his restraint upon their evil, where sinful people are all doing whatever they want to do, it will not be pleasant; indeed, it will be like existing in a “fiery furnace” (Matthew 13:42), a “lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15), and with “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 8:12)

For much more information on why and how Christians need to engage the public square, i.e., effectively communicate God’s Word and will in the current issues in our community, state, and nation, see the documents on the [Christian Action](#) and [Current Issues](#) pages of my free and secure [general](#) and [academic](#) Websites. See in particular both the lecture and the course, “Christian Witness in the Public Forum—Increasing Your Comfort Level to Speak the Truth in Love: Is Pleasing God Your Highest Priority?”

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel. So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon...And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.” (Nehemiah 8:1-3)
- “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: ‘Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!’” (Revelation 7:9-12)

As indicated throughout the Bible and this photo the church has always been for all ages and nations.

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

Doctrine of the Church

- “...Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand....And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.” (Nehemiah 8:2-3)
- “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb...And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They...worshiped God, saying: ‘Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!’” (Revelation 7:9-12)

As seen throughout the Bible and this video the church has always been for all ages and nations. This almost three hour worship service is at the Chikuluti CCAP (Church of Central Africa Presbyterian) in Malawi. Their worship is in the Chichewa language.

Meaning and Practical Benefits



View at: <https://youtu.be/nMAHqs5SB5Q>

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

“¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”
(Ephesians 6:10-18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. We also see a distinction in the Bible between the church militant and the church triumphant.
 - a. The church militant is the theological term referring to the conflicts the church on earth faces in carrying out its calling from God.
 - 1) The church is engaged in a holy (spiritual) war. (Ephesians 6:10-18)
 - 2) We need to discern both the visible and the invisible dimensions of this conflict to understand and be best prepared for the battle God has called us to engage.
 - a) **This is a matter of life and death**—spiritually and eternally for everyone—and physically in the present for many in the horrendous persecution of Christians globally, many being put to death because they believe in Christ, which is one of the reasons Paul urges continual prayer for all the saints. (6:18)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”
(Ephesians 6:10-18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. a. 2) We must continually keep in mind and teach both the visible and the invisible dimensions of this conflict to understand reality, be best prepared for the fight ourselves, and to help God's people prepare for and win the fight as he has called us out (*ekklēsia*) to do. This is our identity and our *raison d'être*.
- e) The failure to discern this reality brings much harm to many people, i.e., engaging in activities that are portrayed as being “innocent” and “fun” but are deceptively demonic, e.g., astrology; aura reading; tarot cards; crystal balls, and any other form of fortune-telling, e.g., Ouija boards, mediums, seances, black (and much other magic, except for Christian “magicians,” who actually refer to themselves more accurately as illusionists and who use their program to show the dangers and deception in magic); false religions; Yoga (which is based on and is a form of Hinduism); any unbiblical sex; and married people flirting with members of the opposite sex. Cite local examples.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. a. 2) We need to discern both the visible and the invisible dimensions of this conflict to understand and be best prepared for the daily struggle.
- 3) Militant is a necessary term to help church people become aware, and to **keep reminding us, of the unseen (thus unknown without God's revelation) but very real and crucial spiritual battle that has an eternal dimension in which we are engaged.**
- Too many people think the church is a nice club that will look good on their resume and which they can attend when it fits into their crowded schedules.
Little is farther from the truth.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

“Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?’ ...⁵Then one of the elders said to me... ‘See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.’

⁶Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

⁹And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” (Revelation 5:1-2,5-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. We also see a distinction in the Bible between the church militant and the church triumphant.
 - b. The church triumphant refers to the church in heaven celebrating victory in and through Christ Jesus. (Revelation 4 and 5) See also Eschatology below.
 - 1) The church celebrates the victory ***of and with*** the Lord Jesus Christ!
 - 2) The church celebrates its vindication and coming reign in the new heaven and new earth.
 - + Reflect and Discuss: What blessings for the church militant come from this doctrine now? Consider the encouragement knowing what lies ahead for us and the great joy our loved ones in Christ are already having!

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

“Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:15-23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. The militant church is both visible and invisible.
 - a. The church visible refers to the typical congregation gathered together for worship and various other aspects of its life and work together.
 - 1) As such, unbelievers are mixed in with true believers.
 - 2) Unbelievers are present with many motivations including, but not limited to, the following among others:
 - a) those genuinely seeking the truth but not yet committed to Christ,
 - b) those looking for personal gain, e.g., business contacts, a pure spouse, trustworthy friends, information.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. The militant church visible includes true Christians at all levels of development, from very immature to mature. It also includes non-Christians.
 - a. 3) Sometimes people have had painful experiences when associated with the visible church. This distinction helps people understand and be on guard. The Bible teaches that all people sin and fall short of the glory of God. (1 Kings 8:46; Romans 3:23). Some true believers are not far along in the sanctification process.
 - 4) Non-Christians, who are also present, are either unaware of or not committed to following Christ's command to love.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. The militant church is both visible and invisible.
 - a. 5) Nevertheless, it is good that immature Christians and non-Christians are present in the visible church for many reasons, including that they both hear the Word of God and see mature Christians modeling an engaging Christ-like lifestyle that the Holy Spirit can lead them to embrace and in which to mature in Christ. But important implications must be kept in mind.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. The militant church is both visible and invisible.

- b. The church invisible (spiritually) consists of true believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church invisible constitutes the kingdom of God, those who live and act willingly ruled by God in their minds and hearts.

The kingdom is here in part (Luke 17:21) but not yet in its fullest, so we pray regularly, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come [in its fullest], your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...” (Matthew 6:9-10)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “⁷Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
⁸Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.
⁹Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. ‘If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
¹⁰and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.” (Isaiah 58:7-10)
- “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,” (Matthew 25:35)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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 - b. The church invisible (spiritually) consists of true believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church invisible constitutes the kingdom of God, those who live willingly ruled by God in their minds and hearts.

The concept of the kingdom of God, though not mentioned in those words in the Old Testament (OT), is a major motif and theme running through the whole Bible. Key principles of the kingdom are mentioned in the OT, including in Deuteronomy 23:24. Thus, those principles that pertain to the kingdom in both testaments apply today and will forever. (Isaiah 58:7,10; Ezekiel 18:7,16; Matthew 5:17-18; 25:35-40)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. The militant church is both visible and invisible.
 - b. The church invisible (spiritually) consists of true believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church invisible constitutes the kingdom of God, those who live willingly ruled by God in their minds and hearts. At first it's not evident who do and who don't belong to the true church, but the true church becomes visible in
 - 1) the profession ***and*** conduct of the members,
 - 2) the ministry of the Word (rightly taught—no heresy) and sacraments (rightly in a worthy manner [1 Corinthians 11:20-34]), and
 - 3) the organization and government of the true church.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42)
- “...there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.
²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:25-27)
- “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)
- “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - The church is an organism.
 - 4) The church is also referred to with the Greek word, *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*), i.e., fellowship, communion, association, partnership, sharing, participation, contribution, close relationship, generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism (e.g., Acts 2:42). This dimension of the church is especially recognized in the Russian Orthodox Church with the word *sobornost*, considered untranslatable but the words fellowship or group consciousness are typically understood as coming the closest to its meaning. Theologian Bernard Ramm explains that “It is the feeling of oneness and communion which all worshipers have towards the assembled Church during the performance of the liturgy. This quality of *sobornost* distinguishes the Russian Church from the authoritarianism of Roman Catholicism and the individualism of Protestantism (ODCC, p. 1266).” (Ramm, p. 119)

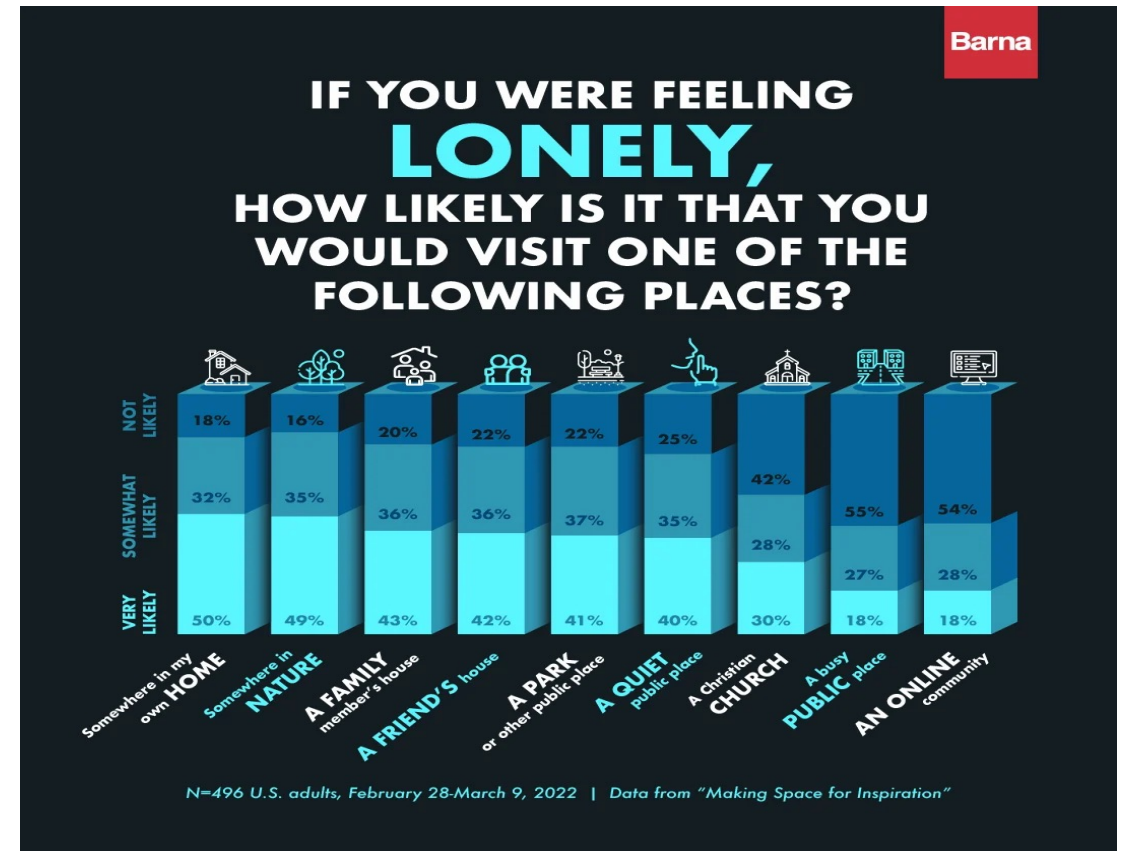
Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
The church is an organism.
- 5) The body of Christ offers much more to meet one of human's most important needs: the need to belong, and to overcome one of the top emotional/social needs of people today: loneliness. Leaders: Take note.



Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “For God is not a God of disorder* but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,...” (1 Corinthians 14:33)
 - * < (Greek) ἀκαταστασία (*akatastasia*), disturbance, confusion, unrest, rebellion, insurrection, tumult, disorder
- “Let all things be done decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - The church is an organization.
 - + God’s people can serve more effectively working together in a coordinated and planned manner than they could as individuals.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that *they may be* one as we are one.” (John 17:11)
- “There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:4-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - a. The attributes (character traits) of the true church are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church. Since 325 A.D. Christians have professed belief in these four Biblical attributes in the Nicene Creed.
 - 1) The church is **one**, a unity. In John 17:11, the Greek verb, “*they may be*” (present tense, active voice) and Jesus’ statement “as we” (he and the Father) indicate that the unity already exists, rather than something to accomplish; i.e., Jesus is praying for the Father to protect his people, the church, that they continue to be one rather than that that they become one. As the excellent Lutheran Bible scholar, R.C.H. Lenski says, Jesus “prays only for this, that the oneness already established may remain unbroken by the guardian care of the Father.”

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one.” (John 17:11)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - a. The attributes (character traits) of the true church are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church. Christians continue to profess belief in these four Biblical attributes cited in the Nicene Creed.
 - 1) The church is **one**, a unity. Lenski continues, “How will [the oneness] be kept intact? By keeping the disciples ‘in the name,’ in the Word, in the utterances of Jesus (...v. 8). How may this oneness be endangered, how may a disciple drop out of it? By any teaching or doctrine contrary to the Word...The entire prayer has the one great burden that we may be preserved in oneness by complete adherence to the Word.” Heresy hinders the preservation and growth in oneness.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one.” (John 17:11)
- “There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:4-5)
- “Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.” (Romans 14:1)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - a. The attributes (character traits) of the true church are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church.
 - 1) The church is **one**, a unity. The oneness of the true church must be remembered especially today with all its divisions. The true church includes the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), the Eastern Orthodox churches that split from the RCC in 1059, and the Protestant Churches, unregistered and registered, that hold to the Bible as their highest authority and whose authoritative doctrines, creeds, and official documents (including constitutions and by-laws) conform to God’s Word. Even though we differ in some “disputable matters,” (Romans 14:1ff.) we accept those others in these denominations as our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

⁷But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

⁸This is why it says: ‘When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.’

⁹(What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

(Ephesians 4:3-16)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.

a. The attributes (character traits) of the true church are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church.

1) The church is **one**, a unity, but unity does not mean uniformity. Unity is to be maintained, but uniformity is not a goal: neither in the Bible nor in life. For the richness in diversity, see Ephesians 4:11. Diversity is to be valued, but not diversity that is in opposition to the Bible, God's Word.

Church Unity

Always keep in mind the church unity for which Jesus prayed so fervently, as recorded in John 17. We should avoid church divisions and splitting churches if at all possible. To do so, it is important to distinguish between these two very distinct matters and function accordingly.

1. “Disputable Matters” between and among true believers are allowable. (Romans 14:1ff.) Where true believers in Christ interpret the respective Bible texts differently, i.e., where two different interpretations are possible, then out of Christian love simply agree to disagree and maintain the unity of the church.
2. Heresy and apostasy **must not be allowed** in the church. (1 Corinthians 5:9)
 - a. First, correct the misunderstanding of those who say, “The church should not judge others.” That is a misreading of Jesus’ statement in Matthew 7:1. Many places in the Bible, including Jesus himself later in the same chapter, indicate that there are times when we must make judgments pertaining to what is right and wrong, including for the sake of the other person(s). We are told to admonish one another. (Colossians 1:28; 3:16) For more on the Biblical teaching pertaining to judging, see my free e-book, [*What Is God’s Will Concerning Homosexuality? Help for Church Leaders and Others to Speak the Truth in Love.*](#)
 - b. Next, attempt to correct the heretical teaching and/or evil behavior. Speak with the church leaders and follow the guidelines in the Bible, together with the church’s denominational policy, for bringing such people under church discipline.
 - c. If the person(s) who have been disciplined do not change, the last step is excommunication, with the prayer and objective of restoring the one(s) sinning so seriously. (1 Corinthians 5:5)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: “Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.” (Leviticus 19:2)
- “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
¹¹Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. ¹²Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” (1 Peter 2:9-12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - a. The attributes (character traits) of the true church are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and the calling of God to the whole church militant, and they help people discern between a true and a false church.
 - 2) The church is **holy**. The word holy means separate, uncommon, pure. It does not accommodate its teaching to conform to cultural norms. Young people especially are looking for authenticity. Here it is. Peter explains perfectly and clearly what holiness means for the church; it seems like he could have written this passage this morning! People want to see their leaders maintain their courage and not capitulate the teaching of God’s Word. They do not respect theological cowardice.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,’” (Matthew 28:18-19)
- “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)
- “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.” (Revelation 7:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - a. The attributes (character traits) of the true church are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church.
 - 3) The church is ***catholic***; it has a global perspective, presence, and purpose. In order to appease former Roman Catholics who have very strong negative feelings about that denomination, some congregations substitute the word “Christian” for “catholic” in the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds. However, Christian is not a substitute for catholic, which means universal or global. We should rather teach the difference and help fellow believers to distinguish in their minds “catholic” from “Roman Catholic.” Such instruction may need to be done weekly for a while just prior to reciting the creed.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “...from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,” (2 Timothy 3:15-16)
- “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21)
- “Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. ¹⁷Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.” (2 Peter 3:15-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - a. The attributes (character traits) of the true church are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church.
- 4) The church is ***apostolic***. The term addresses the question of the validity of the church's authority. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the authority of the church comes directly in a succession from the apostle Peter, whom they call the first pope. Protestant churches derive their authority directly from being committed to and following the Word of God that was written by the apostles who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the Scriptures recorded in the New Testament together with the Old Testament that was approved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.” (1 John 4:1-3)
- “if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.” (1 Timothy 3:15)
- “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - b. The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church are primarily, but not solely, aspects of the visible church and help people discern between a true and a false church.
 - 1) ***True preaching and teaching of the Word of God.*** The failure to make the church’s preaching and teaching congruent with God’s Word is the primary human cause of heresy, discord, and dishonoring God where churches wind up departing from being a true church.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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²This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.” (1 John 4:1-3)
- “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:2)
- “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - b. The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church help people discern between a true and a false church.
 - 1) **True preaching and teaching of the Word of God.** David French insightfully exposes another disastrous error of those who fail to understand and teach historic Christian theology, “the temptation to forsake Christian doctrine to seek the approval of a hostile culture. This is the old argument that the world would embrace the Church if only the Church were more like the world. It is embraced by much of Mainline Protestantism, and it’s the path to religious extinction. In the effort to appeal to the world, the Church becomes the world, and the logic for its distinct existence disappears. Thus the rapid decline of denomination after denomination that has decided to essentially merge with America’s secular culture.” In doing so, the church loses its holy mark—holy (*op cit.*) in both the OT and NT means set apart.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matthew 28:19)
- “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
²⁷Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.
²⁸A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-30)
- See also Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38-39,42.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - b. The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church are aspects primarily, but not solely, of the visible church and help people discern between a true and a false church.
 - 2) ***Right administration of the sacraments.***
The number of the sacraments in most Protestant theology is two, baptism and the Lord's Supper, based on the number of sacraments Christ specifically commanded to be celebrated. They always should be celebrated in accord with the Word of God, given only to believers and their children, and administered by lawful ministers of the Word and ordained church elders.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.” (Leviticus 19:17)
- “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. ¹⁶But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that “every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 18:15-18)
- “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another...” (Colossians 3:16)
- Cf. Proverbs 15:1; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 3:16; James 5:19-20

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - b. The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church are aspects primarily, but not solely, of the visible church and help people discern between a true and a false church.
 - 3) **Faithful exercise of church discipline** This mark of the church occurs individually and corporately. Individually, it occurs as we care for one another, speaking up when a brother or sister needs a word of admonition. We do it by “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15), or as David Augsburger says, “care-fronting,” (contrasted with confronting in the pejorative sense). Admonishing is not what Jesus meant when he said, “Do not judge...” (Matthew 7:1), where he was talking about not being judgmental. For more on the difference between admonishing and judging, see section on judging in my free e-book, [*What Is God’s Will Concerning Homosexuality? Help for Church Leaders and Others To Speak the Truth in Love*](#), p. 316 ff.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. ²And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? ³Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. ⁴When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.”
(1 Corinthians 5:1-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - b. The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church are aspects primarily, but not solely, of the visible church and help people discern between a true and a false church.
- 3) ***Faithful exercise of church discipline***
Corporately, the church cares for its members when it collectively observes that a member has seriously departed from the teaching of God's Word in a way that is publicly noticed and whose behavior is harmful to him or herself, to others, that dishonors God, and is counterproductive to the church's mission of redemption in Christ Jesus. The church then disciplines that member in order to restore him or her and witness well for God in the world. When the church fails to discipline it fails the Lord and the accomplishment of his purposes, the church, and the sinner and his or her family.

Is God Calling You to Professional or to a Volunteer Ministry?

A Guide for Individuals and the Church to Confirm a Call from God to Ministry

(See the whole guide in the unabridged version of [*Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology*](#) on the [Christian Theology](#) page of my Website, [From Acorn to Oak 12.](#))

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

As he [Paul] neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

⁶"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."...

⁸Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.

¹¹The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹²In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

¹³"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

¹⁵But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. ¹⁶I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

¹⁷Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹and after taking some food, he regained his strength. (Acts 9:3-19)

Application to the Church

1. Throughout the Bible God works 1-1 with the person he is calling, communicating with that person's mind and heart.
 - a. God prepares those whom he calls to ministry by giving them spiritual gifts, knowledge, and experiences that they will draw on in ministry long before God calls them to the ministry he has for them.
 - b. Frequently, but not always, God calls people to ministry who are not at all thinking about ministry as a career, and, when questioned even oppose the thought, as we see in the Bible.
 - + From childhood I was periodically asked if I had considered becoming a minister, and throughout the years I said "No, not me," until an experience I had in college.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

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Application to the Church

2. At the same time, God works through others in the church. He calls leaders for his church vertically (1-1) and horizontally.
 - a. He thus communicates through fellow believers in Christ who know us well and who see in us gifts we sometimes don't see in ourselves.
 - b. He also communicates through fellow believers in Christ whom God has put in places of authority to discern and approve God's call of those who claim he has called them to ministry. This is a very important function in the church, whereby candidates for ministry are "vetted," i.e., evaluated for approval, in the process of verifying God's call of them and their gifts, education, and experience.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

- “Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.” (Luke 10:7)
- “and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.” (Acts 18:3)
- “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.
¹⁸For the Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and ‘The worker deserves his wages.’” (1 Timothy 5:17-18)
- “But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 9:15)

Application to the Church

3. In the 1-1 process where God works with the person he is calling, he communicates with that person's mind and heart.
 - a. God calls people to professional as well as volunteer ministry. Often the two types of ministry involve the same work but with significant distinctions. Let's consider first professional ministry.
 - 1) In professional ministry the worker is paid, since he or she is doing that work so extensively that no other time is available for earning one's living.
 - 2) Professional ministry is one's life work, and compensation is needed and expected, either as a salary, or per hour, the latter being usually for part-time work that involves a significant time commitment.

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Twelve Important Questions to Help You Discern Such a Call from God

If you think God may be calling you to professional ministry, consider these guidelines for discerning your call, assuming you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. (Romans 10:9) You need to be a member of a Christian church in good and regular standing. There are at least 12 questions that are especially helpful in order to ascertain whether God may be calling you to ministry as a profession.

1. Do you sense an urge to consider or do ministry professionally? Is it a persistent interest? Could you be content doing anything else? If so, do that other work.
2. Have you prayed about this question? Do you pray regularly?
3. Have others in your home church, who know you well, asked you to consider becoming a minister (professionally)? Were these comments unsolicited? However, if no one ever says anything that you didn't prompt him or her to say, don't automatically conclude you shouldn't consider professional ministry.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

"This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me.

⁴Don't we have the right to food and drink? ⁵Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? ⁶Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?

⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? ⁸Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing?

⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us,... ¹¹If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?...

¹³Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:3-14)

Application to the Church

3. Throughout the Bible God works 1-1 with the person he is calling, communicating with that person's mind and heart.

b. God calls people to professional as well as volunteer ministry. Often the two types of ministry involve the same work, but with the amount of time involved being a key distinction. Now let's look briefly at volunteer ministry.

- 1) Volunteer ministry is not usually compensated, or if an honorarium is given for exceptional and extensive service, it is not intended to be sufficient for full salary.
- 2) Volunteers serve in most types of ministry, but in limited ways, typically due to time constraints or to not having the education required for doing that ministry professionally.

Vocation: God Also Calls to Other Occupations

God calls people to other occupations as well as to those in and associated with the church. Obviously, these other occupations are much more numerous than those in the church, and they, too, are significant and important.

It is a life-transforming and shaping experience to realize and include in our worldview, that our daily work is serving God and contributing to his work in his world. This is what in historic Christian theology is called our vocation (< Latin, *vocare* = to call), our calling from God. **No** work a Christian does here on earth, whether as a homemaker (which is unsurpassed in importance), or an occupation for which one is paid, or volunteering, is unimportant; on the contrary, it is very important, for it is a service to God. When our work is done with that awareness, we have the strongest basis for finding meaning and joy in our work, even when some times are challenging, when we encounter various trials. At those times, we can say with the Apostle James, "I count it all joy." (James 1:2) This perspective is further reinforced when the apostle says several verses later, "...the brother [generic; sister is also included] of humble circumstances is to glory [Greek, *καυχάομαι* (*kauchaomai*) = boast (The verb is emphatic, indicated by being the first word in the sentence in Greek, and in the Imperative mood, a command.)] in his high position." (NASB, v. 9) What a wonderful way to manage and overcome stress, disappointment, discouragement, and a host of other problems. At those times remember also such comforting words from God's Word as John 16:33 and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. For added joy: memorize them! Be sure to read a portion of God's Word and pray every day.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

- “For God is not a God of disorder* but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,...” (1 Corinthians 14:33)
 - * < Greek: ἀκαταστασία (*akatastasia*), disturbance, unrest, confusion, rebellion, insurrection, tumult, disorder
- “Let all things be done decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV)

Application to the Church

3. Thus, God works through others in the church in selecting the leaders he gives his people. He calls leaders for his church vertically and horizontally.
 - c. He works through others in the ongoing accountability that we need to keep in accord with his Word and his will.
 - 3) Thus, whether I am a professional or a volunteer minister, I cannot just go and do anything I want. If everyone did that (and many are trying) there would be disorganization that would dishonor God and the body of Christ, and it would be counterproductive to accomplishing the mission of the church.

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

The Doctrine of the Church

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. ³²‘Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.’” (Acts 20:28-32)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - c. The government of the church
 - 4) The power or authority of the church is from Christ the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23) through the Holy Spirit. (Acts 20:28)
 - a) Teaching power: Berkhof explains it well: “The Word of God was given to the Church as a precious deposit of the truth, and the Church is commissioned to guard the truth, to hand it on faithfully from generation to generation, and to defend it against all forces of unbelief, 1 Tim. 1:3,4; II Tim. 1:13; Tit. 1:9-11.” (301). See also Acts 20:28-32; 2 Timothy 3:16.

+ **Reflect and Discuss:** What contemporary applications to you see of this text?

(Consider the attempts of many church leaders to distort the teaching of God’s Word on homosexuality, trying to accommodate to cultural trends.)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

God's Word

- “Let all things be done decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV)
- “I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.” (Romans 15:14)
- “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16)
- “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28)

See also John 21:15-17; 1 Peter 5:2.

Application to the Church

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - c. The government of the church
 - 4) The power/authority of the church is from Christ the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23) through the Holy Spirit. (Acts 20:28)
 - b) The governing power/authority of the church contains two aspects. (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40)
 - 1- The governing authority of the church contains a regulatory power. Thus, as Berkhof writes, “the Church has the right to carry into effect the laws which Christ has ordained for the Church.” (302)

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

- “Let all things be done decently and in order.”
(1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV)
- “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. ²And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?...⁷Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed....¹³God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you." (1 Corinthians 5:1,2,7,13)
- “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.”
(Titus 3:10)

Cf. Matthew 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23; 2 Corinthians 2:5-7; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 1:20.

Application to the Church

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - c. The government of the church
 - 4) The power/authority of the church is from Christ the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23) through the Holy Spirit. (Acts 20:28)
 - b) **The governing power/authority of the church contains two aspects.**
(1 Corinthians 14:33, 40)
 - 2- The governing authority of the church contains a **judicial** power. Thus, Berkhof observes, **“The Church is in duty bound to guard its holiness by the exercise of proper discipline.”** (303)

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

Berkhof offers further guidance for the church into the judicial aspect of its governing power or authority. This aspect of the church's government is neglected too much today.

“The purpose of discipline in the Church is twofold. In the first place it seeks to carry into effect the law of Christ concerning the admission and exclusion of members; and in the second place it aims at promoting the spiritual edification of the members of the Church by securing their obedience to the laws of Christ. Both of these aims are subservient to a higher end, the maintenance of the holiness of the Church of Jesus Christ. If there are diseased members, the Church will first of all seek to effect a cure, but if this proves impossible, it will put away the diseased member for the protection of the other members. While all the members of the Church are in duty bound to warn and admonish the wayward [*e.g., Leviticus 19:17b*], only the officers of the Church can apply Church censures. The latter can deal with private sins only when these are brought to their attention according to the rule given in Matt. 18:15-17, but are in duty bound to deal with public sins even when no formal accusation is brought.

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28-32)
- “Again Jesus said, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of my sheep.’” (John 21:16)
- “Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:2-3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - c. The government of the church
 - 4) The power of the church is from Christ the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23) through the Holy Spirit. (Acts 20:28)
 - c) **Ministry of mercy** (John 21:16; 1 Peter 5:2-3)

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine? Ministry of Mercy

The power or ministry of mercy in the church is exercised today largely, but not only, by the pastoral care ministers of the church. This ministry consists primarily of the pastor(s) and elders, but also by members of the church who have the gifts of the Spirit for such work (e.g., Romans 12:7-13; 1 Corinthians 12:9;28,30; 14:1,3-4,26,31; Ephesians 4:11), and by the body as a whole who love one another (e.g., 1 Corinthians 8:1; 13:7,8,13; John 14:21; Romans 13:9-10; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 4:15; 5:28; Philippians 2:1; Colossians 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Philemon 1:7; 1 Peter 4:8; 2 John 1:6).

What about the spiritual gifts, such as healing? Some Bible scholars and theologians, e.g., Berkhof, believe that what are called the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, e.g., healing, the ability to perform miracles, and tongues, the special gifts God gave the apostles and some other early Christians, ceased with the end of God's special revelation, that was written down and became the Bible, at the close of the first century A. D. Other scholars, such as Peter Wagner, see the extraordinary gifts as still occurring. From my own study of the Bible and systematic theology, many conversations, and teaching for over half a century, I hold to a position somewhat between these two positions, but closer to the one espoused by Berkhof and others, where I observe some, but limited, evidence of the extraordinary gifts being employed by God today, albeit not frequently or widespread. Much talk has been made in the last century of the use of the extraordinary gifts, especially tongues speaking, but a considerable number of occurrences, purporting to be an expression of the gift, has been shown to be mistaken, as discussed above in the section on gifts of the Spirit in [Soteriology](#).

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine? Ministry of Mercy

Since the first century A. D., the ministry of mercy, or pastoral care, of the church has focused on caring for the poor (see Matthew 26:11 and Mark 14:7, as an indication of one of the church's chief tasks after the Lord returned to heaven). See also the following texts that teach the importance of the church ministering to the needs of the poor: Acts 4:34; 6:1-6; 11:29; 20:35; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:1,6,7,12-14; Galatians 2:10; 6:10; Ephesians 4:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-12; 5:10,16; James 1:27; 2:15,16; 1 John 3:17.

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine? Ministry of Mercy

New Testament Terms for Church Elders

All three of these terms refer to the same person but convey slightly different aspects of the leader's work. As the church grew, and more challenges arose requiring more time than volunteers could afford to spend, certain elders were paid.

- **ἐπισκοπή** (*episkopē*) = overseer, bishop (Acts 20:17,28; 1 Timothy 3:1); refers to the structural work to be done. (Emphasis on task)
- **πρεσβύτερος** (*presbuteros*) = elder (Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; 1 Timothy 5:17); refers to the dignity of the office and the leader holding it and pastoral care (James 5:14).
- **ποιμήν** (*poimēn*) = shepherd, pastor (Acts 20:17,28; Ephesians 4:11); refers primarily to the function of the leader as teacher and caregiver. (Emphasis on people)

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine? Ministry of Mercy
New Testament Term for Other Church Leaders/Ministers

- **διάκονος** (*diakonos*) = servant, deacon, minister
 - + In Greek culture the *diakonos* was the servant of the king. The church used the term but shaped its meaning according to its service of the King of kings, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 20:28; Romans 15:25; 16:1; Acts 6:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:12)

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine? Ministry of Mercy

God's Word

- “Again Jesus said, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of [Shepherd (NASB)] my sheep.’” (John 21:16)
- “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of* God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:2-3 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Application

- In the Bible the Pastoral Care Ministry of the church is called shepherding. (John 21:16 [poimaine, take care of]; 1 Peter 5:2 [poimante, shepherd]) > ποιμαίνω (*poimainō*), **shepherd**, herd or tend sheep; rule, govern; care for, look after, nourish
- Be a model of a caring servant leader for the rest of the church. (1 Peter 5:3)

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine? Ministry of Mercy

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Again Jesus said, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of [Shepherd (NASB)] my sheep.’” (John 21:16)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The ministry of mercy functions informally in the church as organism as the believers in and followers of Christ act in caring ways to meet the needs of their fellow church members and others associated with the church.
- The ministry of mercy functions formally in the church as organization as pastors, elders, deacons, and others organize to meet people’s needs on specific occasions and over time.
- For more specific information on the above caring occurs, see my PPT, “How to Be a Caring Christian Friend.” The URL is www.fromacorntoak12.com.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ¹⁸‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.’ ²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, ²¹and he began by saying to them, ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” (Luke 4:17-21)
- “The LORD said to Moses, ²‘Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.’” (Leviticus 19:1-2)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - d. Though the term, *means of grace*, is sometimes used in a general sense to refer to the many ways God's people are blessed, the term is generally used in a more restricted and technical sense referring to the Word of God and the sacraments.
 - 1) The Word of God, when referring to the means of grace denotes the written Scripture, all of which points to Jesus Christ, who is also referred to the Word of God.
 - a) The Holy Spirit uses the proclamation of the Word of God to produce the desired fruit in the lives of people and accomplish God's purposes, contrary to the Rationalists and others who think that the Word is enough to effect change in people's lives, and contrary to the antinomians who disregard the Law and hold that the inner working of the Spirit is enough.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,” (2 Timothy 3:16)
- “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)
- “While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’
²⁷Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you.’” (Matthew 26:26-27)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
 - d. The term, means of grace, refers to the Word of God and the sacraments.
 - 2) We should discern the distinctive differences between the Word and the sacraments.
 - a) The Word is the authority for, basis of, and explanation of the sacraments; the latter should not be administered without the Word. The Word goes out to the whole world, but the sacraments are properly administered only to members of the covenant of grace in Christ. Luther: “...without the Word of God the water is simply water, and no baptism. But with the water it is a baptism, a gracious water of life...[and quotes Titus 3:5-8].” (164)
 - b) The word sacrament, not found in the Bible, comes from the Latin word, *sacramentum*, originally a sum of money deposited by two parties in a lawsuit. After the court decision, the winner’s money would be returned; the loser’s money was forfeited as a type of offering to the Roman gods. (Berkhof, 310)

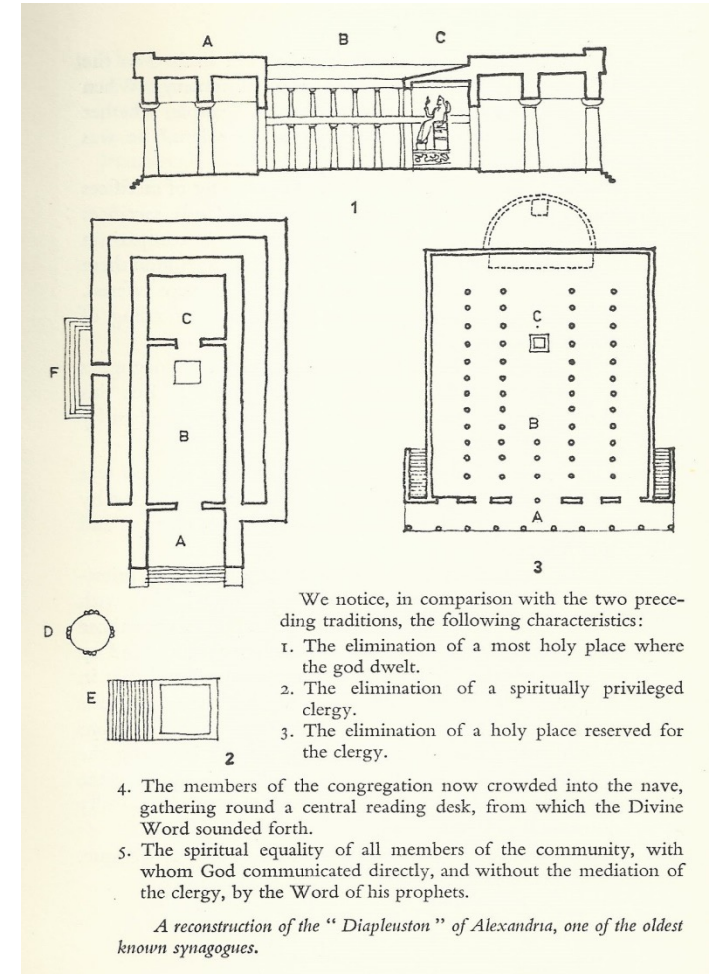
Ecclesiology: What does church architecture teach?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Set up the tabernacle according to the plan shown you on the mountain. ³¹"Make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim worked into it by a skilled craftsman. ³²Hang it with gold hooks on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold and standing on four silver bases. ³³Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the Testimony behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. ³⁴Put the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy Place. (Exodus 26:30-34)
- "And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split." (Matthew 27:50-51)
- "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." (Hebrews 6:19-20; 7:25-27; 10:14,17-25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Church Architecture Portrays Biblical Theology



Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.” (Genesis 17:11-12)
- “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.” (Romans 4:11)
- “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28)
- “And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (Mark 1:4)
- “Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- 4.d.2) Protestant Christians typically celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.
- d) Each of the sacraments contains one or more external elements (water in baptism; bread and wine and/or red grape juice in the Lord's Supper). The external dimension of the sacrament signifies an internal reality that comes from Christ Jesus.
- 1- The sacraments were given to us by God, so we should not alter them in any way.
 - 2- We should keep the Biblical words of institution in the celebration of the sacrament.
 - 3- The symbols God gave must be kept to help people see the connection between the sign and the Biblical reality signified.
 - a- For example, we should not substitute white wine, as one church did so it would be easier to clean the carpet when someone spills the wine; the great amount of blood Jesus shed for us was not white!

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- 4.d.2) Protestant Christians typically celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.
- e) The internal reality that is pointed to by the external signs has several elements:
 - 1- Membership in the covenant of grace (Genesis 17:11)
 - 2- The righteousness of faith (Romans 4:11)
 - 3- The forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28)
 - 4- Faith and repentance (Mark 1:4; 16:16)
 - 5- Communion with Christ in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:3; Colossians 2:11-12)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.” (Romans 4:11)
- “Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” (1 Corinthians 5:7)
- For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. ²They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)
- “In him [Christ] you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:11-12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- 4.d.2) Protestant Christians typically celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.
- g) Protestant Christians believe that the sacraments are not absolutely necessary for salvation, but that they are necessary, because they are divinely commanded by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore, since they have been instituted by the Lord’s command, to willfully neglect their use is spiritually dangerous, as is all disobedience of God’s Word and will. The spiritual danger includes a weakening of the disobedient person’s soul and the lessening of his or her accomplishing the work the Lord has called him or her to do for the extension and nurture of his kingdom.
- h) As we’ll see, when we study the two sacraments in depth, the New Testament sacraments the Lord established are based on their Old Testament counterparts. There is no significant difference between the two sets of sacraments. (See the texts at the left.) In each case, the Old Testament forerunner points forward to Christ, while the New Testament sacraments both point back to Christ and the efficacy of his completed and all-sufficient sacrifice of redemption.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.” (Romans 4:11)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- 4.d.2) Protestant Christians typically celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.
- i) Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate seven sacraments
 - 1- R.C.: Baptism, Eucharist (the Lord’s Supper), confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction.
 - 2- E.O.: Baptism, Chrismation (confirmation, immediately following baptism, priest anointing the newly baptized Christian with “Holy Chrism,” i.e., oil blessed by the bishop), The Eucharist (also immediately after baptism, the beginning of the new life nourished by the Eucharist), confession, holy unction (anointing of the sick), ordination, marriage.
 - j) Protestant churches typically observe just two sacraments in both the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT). The signs and seals of membership in the OT covenant were circumcision and the Passover meal, which were replaced by baptism and the Lord’s Supper in the new covenant in the NT.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

“When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. ²⁰He said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.’ ²¹In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. ²²In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

²³It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. ²⁵Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.” (Hebrews 9:19-28)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2) Protestant Christians typically celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.

j) Protestant churches typically observe just two sacraments in both the OT and the NT.

1- The two OT sacraments were bloody and linked with the sacrificial system that pointed ahead to Jesus Christ.

a- Circumcision, though practiced among Gentile nations as a health measure, was given significance in Israel as a sacrament of God's covenant of grace with Abraham, symbolizing the cutting away of sin.

b- Passover was instituted by God at the time of the Exodus with Moses. This sacrament symbolized and became a type of deliverance of God's people from the bondage of evil.

2- The two NT sacraments are unbloody, since Christ's perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross, no more shedding of blood is needed for the redemption of sins. We now consider the two NT sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper in detail.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)
- “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)
- “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (Acts 2:38-41)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

a] As we see in Acts 2:39 and elsewhere in the Bible, baptism is intended for believing adults and for their children.

1} When Jesus gave the Great Commission, it was to adults to enable them to receive their mission assignment and to have the essentials of what to do.

2} As we see in the Biblical texts, a profession of faith, including repentance, precedes baptism for adults.

3} The sincerity of that faith is the responsibility of the believer; the church is not required to do extensive examination of the genuineness of a confession of faith. However, in matters of church discipline, as we’ve seen above, the church has the responsibility to act accordingly.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

a] As we see in Acts 2:39 and elsewhere in the Bible, baptism is intended for believing adults and for their children.

4} Baptists argue that there are 12 examples of baptisms in the NT, all of which involve adults and a prior profession of faith.

R. C. Sproul finds that three of the 12 mention household baptism, so we have nine examples in the NT that are clearly referring only to adults. The dispute is about the other three, which is 25% of the recorded instances of baptism in the NT, and they include the term household (So and So and his household were baptized).

Pertaining to the nine NT adult baptisms, Sproul offers an insightful observation.

R. C. Sproul on Adult Profession of Faith Prior to Baptism

Pertaining to the nine NT adult baptisms, Sproul offers an insightful observation.

“But there is another dimension here that is very significant, and you almost never hear this one mentioned, and it’s critical: Everyone of those examples that we can find in the New Testament of adults being baptized, who first are required to make a profession of faith and to repent, whatever we can tell about their status prior to their baptism, in the places where we can tell, every single one of them, the person is a pagan convert, a Gentile coming to the faith as a first generation believer. Now if the Baptist could show that one of those adults had been in the family of Christians when that person was an infant and is only now being baptized, then you have a case. Otherwise, all you’re arguing for is what everybody already agrees on, namely that in the case of adults you have to repent and believe before you can receive the sign.” [EDS comment: Notice in Acts 16:29-34, the Philippian jailer asks, “...what must I do to be saved?” Paul and Silas reply, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved—you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house...then immediately he and all his family were baptized.” Nothing is said about a preceding repentance.]

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

“I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.’

⁹Then God said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. ¹⁰This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. ¹³Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.’” (Genesis 17:7-14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

b] Though no Bible verse overtly says to baptize infants, the authorization, indeed the command, for doing so is clearly presented in God’s Word, but it was clearer to the early church that was connected so closely with the Old Testament, so we have to examine the Scriptures theologically in order to see the Biblical basis for God’s command to include infants and other children.

1} Understanding God’s covenant of grace with Abraham is the strongest Biblical basis for baptizing infants.

2} As Biblical scholars explain, the covenant is one of the major motifs that occurs throughout the Bible and that provides the basis for understanding the message of God’s Word.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

“I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.’

⁹Then God said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. ¹⁰This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. ¹³Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.’” (Genesis 17:7-14; see also Romans 4:11.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

b] We see the Biblical basis for baptizing infants beginning with God’s covenant with Abraham.

3} Notice that this covenant is to be an everlasting covenant, as Jesus indicated in Matthew 5:17-18. However, the covenant promise in verse 8, pertaining to God’s gift of Canaan, was given a condition of obedience (1 Kings 9:1-9 *et al.*), which Israel failed to keep, so they lost the land.

4} But the rest of this covenant promise remains everlasting and still intact. Nowhere in the Bible has God removed the promise that children could receive the sign and seal of the covenant.

5} That sign in the covenant with Abraham was circumcision, and God commanded it to be done when the baby was *eight days old*.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- ⁹Then God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. ¹⁰This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised,'" (Genesis 17:7,9-12)
- "At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met [Moses] and was about to kill him. ²⁵But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched [Moses'] feet with it. 'Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me,' she said. ²⁶So the LORD let him alone. (At that time she said 'bridegroom of blood,' referring to circumcision.)" (Exodus 4:24-26)
- "³¹'The time is coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the LORD." (Jeremiah 31:31-32)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

b] We see the Biblical basis for baptizing infants beginning with God's covenant with Abraham.

6} The incident that occurred when Moses was returning to Egypt from Midian (in Exodus 4), shows how seriously God views the disobedience of his command pertaining to circumcision and the disobedience of the leaders of his people. Moses was the leader of his people, and the one through whom God planned to work mighty acts in front of Pharaoh, and he was living in disobedience to God in failing to circumcise his son!

7} Later in the OT, God revealed through the prophet Jeremiah that the time was coming when he would make a new covenant with his people.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you....¹⁰This is my covenant with you and your descendants..., the covenant you are to keep:....¹¹...circumcision will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised,” (Genesis 17:7- 12)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

b] We see the Biblical basis for baptizing infants beginning with God’s covenant with Abraham.

7] As discussed above, later in the OT, God revealed through the prophet Jeremiah that the time is coming when he would make **a new covenant** with his people. Remember, the word in the LXX, Jeremiah 31:31, *καινός* (*kainos*), means new in nature or quality (somewhat like renewed, **having continuity but with a new dimension** [which is why it would “not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers”]), not new in time or origin (not brand new) which is designated by another Greek word also translated new, *νέος* (*neos*). Recall that the covenant is an essential unity, for it is “an everlasting covenant.” (Genesis 17:7)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ.” (Galatians 3:16)
- “In the same way, after supper he [Jesus] took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [καίνος (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:25)
- “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29)
- “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:9-12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

b] We see the Biblical basis for baptizing infants beginning with God's covenant with Abraham.

8} Jesus established the new (καίνος [*kainos*]) covenant. The apostle Paul explained to the Galatians that since all who are in Christ are Abraham's seed and members of this new (but not brand new) covenant, that is the “everlasting covenant” but new in its essence, all in Christ are thus heirs of the covenant promise to Abraham.

However, with God changing both sacraments, and with the other modifications he made, it truly was “not...like the covenant I made with their forefathers.” (Jeremiah 31:32)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ... ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29)
- “...¹⁰and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature,...with the circumcision done by Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism....” (Colossians 2:9-12)
- “Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. ³For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—” (Philippians 3:2-3)
- “...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you....” (Matthew 28:19-20)
- “...the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs [the high priests of the old covenant] as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.” (Hebrews 8:6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

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9} Paul further reveals in his letter to the Colossians that baptism now replaces circumcision. (2:11-12)

10} In fact, in the new covenant it is wrong to be circumcised for religious reasons. (E.g., Philippians 3:2-3)

11} R. C. Sproul and other theologians point out that the NT, in particular the Book of Hebrews, emphasizes that new covenant is more not less inclusive than the old covenant. How, then, can the church prohibit infant children from receiving the sign and seal of the covenant, taking away from them the sign and seal that they have been receiving for thousands of years, thus making the new covenant more exclusive?!

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29)
- “In him [Christ] you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:11-12)
- “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’” (Acts 2:38-39)
- “For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.” (1 Corinthians 7:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

b] We see the Biblical basis for baptizing infants beginning with God's covenant with Abraham.

12} Since God commanded that infants be given the privilege of bearing the sign of the covenant, and nowhere has God withdrawn this privilege, they now receive that privilege in baptism.

As Berkhof well explains, the “exclusion of children would require an unequivocal statement to that effect, but quite the contrary is found, Acts 2:39; Matt. 19:14; 1 Cor. 7:14.” (320) **Since Peter does not specify an age restriction, on what authority can we?** (Acts 2:39)

13} Furthermore, there is no explicit NT command or example in support of Baptists and others who require profession of faith prior to baptizing children.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29)
- “In him [Christ] you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:11-12)
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- “For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.” (1 Corinthians 7:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

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14} We see in the NT other reasons confirming it is God's will that infants be baptized. As Berkhof says, “The language of the New Testament is perfectly consistent with a continuation of the former state...Whole households were repeatedly baptized, and this is represented as something perfectly normal.” (321) Noted Swiss NT Bible scholar and theologian, Oscar Cullmann, maintains that the Greek word, οἶκος (*oikos*, meaning house, dwelling, home, habitation, household, family) not only can but must be understood as specifically referring to children, especially considering the size of first century Near East families.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. ¹⁰All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God--your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, ¹¹together with your children and your wives, and the aliens living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. ¹²You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, ¹³to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” (Deuteronomy 29:9-13)
- “There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the aliens who lived among them.” (Joshua 8:35)
- “All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.” (2 Chronicles 20:13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

b] We see the Biblical basis for baptizing infants beginning with God’s covenant with Abraham.

15} Furthermore, we also see that children were always present whenever the covenant was renewed. The Scriptures in the left column are only a few of the ones that can be cited.

16} Since infants receiving the sign and seal of the covenant is so clearly commanded throughout the whole OT, the burden of proof as to why infants in the covenant cannot receive the NT sign and seal of covenant membership is on those who withhold this privilege, and this matter is huge in the light of its importance to God. The silence of any NT mention of God taking away this privilege is deafening.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. ¹⁰All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God--your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, ¹¹together with your children and your wives, and the aliens living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. ¹²You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, ¹³to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” (Deuteronomy 29:9-13)
- “There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the aliens who lived among them.” (Joshua 8:35)
- “All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.” (2 Chronicles 20:13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

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16} God nowhere in the OT or NT rescinds the command to give the covenant sign to infants. Sensing the need to offer something, churches that do not baptize infants typically offer some type of dedication. R. C. Sproul insightfully points out a significant theological problem with dedication: they give the children an OT sign where there is no NT provision for such a practice. Also, recall that dedication only occurs once in the OT and that not by any command from God; thus, it cannot hermeneutically be considered normative. Further, dedication is theologically very different from baptism.

Ecclesiology: Historical Argument for Infant Baptism

Those who argue against infant baptism like to point out that we don't read of infants being baptized until well into the second century A. D. However, a closer look shows that history is very supportive of the practice of infant baptism by the early church. For example, one of their leaders, the North African lawyer, Tertullian, called the "father of Latin theology," who questioned the practice, admitted it was universal throughout the church, not just in North Africa. Origen, an outstanding scholar of the Scriptures, writer, and preacher, who was martyred for the faith, said the tradition came from the apostles and is the custom of the church. With the early church literature clearly mentioning the controversies that existed at the time, such as heavy persecution and the fight against the influence of pagan theology, the silence of any controversy concerning giving the covenant sign to infants argues for rather than against the practice.

Theologian, R. C. Sproul adds a further point. "How likely is it given the abundance of written material that does survive from apostolic times to middle of the second century, that focuses on every serious controversy and theological debate in that hundred year period, isn't it strange that there is not a word of debate about infant baptism? The historical record seems to suggest that this thing spread to be the universal practice of the church and nobody said a peep about it. I think the reason for that is obvious. That at that time the New Testament Christian community was much more in tune with the historic continuity of the covenants. And that nobody even ever questioned the business of including the babies with the covenant sign. I think the argument from history is also in favor of infant baptism and not against it."

In his comment on Acts 2:38-39, R. C. H. Lenski states, "'Your children' allows no restriction as to age. How the Holy Spirit enters their hearts by baptism is his concern only, ours is to administer that baptism, in no wise doubting, otherwise we could not answer to God." (110)

Ecclesiology: Significant Differences between Baptism and Dedication

Infant Baptism

1. Based on covenant commands of God and is required in his Word.
2. Covenant commands continually recur in Bible.
3. Focus is on what God is doing in the life of the child.
4. Baptism a means of grace.
5. God's declaration that the child belongs to him and is affirmed as a member of his covenant and the body of Christ with all the accompanying blessings assured. Consider the implications.
6. Child shares in one of the two sacraments instituted by our Lord (and both in some church denominations).
7. Practice is well-grounded in God's Word.
8. Result: 1st class citizenship in God's kingdom.

Infant Dedication

1. No command of God and is optional for parents.
2. No Biblical basis: occurs only once in OT, where Hannah dedicates Samuel to the Lord's work in the tabernacle (1 Samuel 1:21ff.), which was voluntary and not by any command of God, thus not normative for others.
3. Focus is on what parents are committing to do in the life of the child.
4. Dedication not a means of grace.
5. No God-declared authoritative statement that the child belongs to him, or affirmation of being a member of his covenant, or assurance of his continued blessings. Consider the implications!
6. Child is deprived from sharing in even one of the two sacraments instituted by the Lord.
7. Commits a serious theological error: gives the child an OT sign where there is no NT provision for such a practice. Hermeneutical principles prohibit making Scriptural occurrences normative that take place only once and without a command to do so.
8. Result: lower class citizenship and inferior status, in God's kingdom.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [καίνος (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’” (1 Corinthians 11:25)
- “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29)
- “When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, ‘I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.’ ¹⁵And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. ¹⁶Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. ¹⁷Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.” (Hebrews 6:13-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

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17} The writer to the Hebrews explains that this new covenant is unchangeable. (6:13-17)

18} One question I've often received from women and girls, is what about women and girls in the OT? Were they included in the covenant? The answer is yes they always were; however, in the culture of the Near East at that time, women and girls were included by their relationship with their husband/father head of the clan. In that patriarchal society, the women and girls participated in the benefits of the male head of the clan, which among God's people included covenant membership.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

“To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

¹⁵But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. ¹⁶How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

¹⁷Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.”

(1 Corinthians 7:12-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

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19} To rightly interpret this text, view it in the light of the covenant. Also, remember what holy means and that it’s the root of the word sanctification. (For more on both words, see the sections above: holy in Theology and sanctification in Soteriology.) Essentially, holy means set apart, uncommon, clean; sanctification is development in Christ-likeness that further equips God’s covenant people to serve and please God and accomplish his purposes for them ever more effectively. A child needs at least one believing parent to be and develop in the covenant. Sproul explains more.

Ecclesiology: R. C. Sproul on the Implications of 1 Corinthians 7:12-17, and especially 7:14, for Baptizing Children

Now one thing is significant that's often overlooked here, and that is what seems to be communicated here, that is the same as the Old Testament, is that when the head of the family enters into a covenant, his entire family receives the benefit of that. So that covenant principle is reaffirmed in the household baptisms. Now that's very significant, particularly where we do have passages in the New Testament that do specifically refer to infants and their status in the covenant. And I'm thinking of 1 Corinthians where the apostle teaches (and as far as I'm concerned this is one of the most poignant reasons for infant baptism there is, and it's one you hardly ever hear talked about) where Paul says the unbelieving wife is sanctified by her believing husband, and the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife. [EDS Note: This text refers to marriages in which one of the partners has become a Christian since the wedding; it is not contradicting God's will elsewhere stated in his Word that Christians should not marry non-Christians. See the discussion above, especially pertaining to 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Nehemiah 10:30; and Deuteronomy 7:3-4,6.]

Now that throws a lot of people for a loop, because we normally use the term sanctified to refer to that which follows justification. It presupposes being in a state of grace or in a state of salvation...Now the message of the New Testament is clear, that salvation depends on faith. The important part of that text in 1 Corinthians is not about the unbelieving wife and the unbelieving husband but the rest of it. Why does Paul say that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, for what reason? Else would their children be unclean. But says the apostle now are they holy. Now you have three words in this text that are very significant and pregnant with meaning: sanctified, unclean, and holy. Now I ask you this: what would those terms mean to a first century Jew?

Ecclesiology: R. C. Sproul on the Implications of 1 Corinthians 7:12-17, and especially 7:14, for Baptizing Children

What does it mean to be sanctified? In our doctrinal language, we use the word sanctification to refer to the process of our being conformed to Christ after we are justified. But the primary meaning of sanctification in the Bible is to be set apart, to be consecrated, to be placed in a sacred, favorable position. Just as Israel was set apart from the nations, and the families of Jewish people were sanctified, that is they were set apart, and those who were not in that group of sanctified people, which was the covenant community, what were they called in the Old Testament? They were not the set apart ones. Here we have Paul using this word that specifically refers, not just to children in general, but to infants, and he says of this that infants are now, if there's just one believer, for the sake of the infants lest they not be considered unclean, because the infant is holy. There is a certain sense in which the unbelieving spouse is considered sanctified, not for the sake of the believing husband or the believing wife, but specifically for the sake of the infant. That the infant may not be considered unclean, and that the infant may be considered holy. What I submit to you is that that is covenant language par excellence. What I hear Paul saying there, and I could be wrong, but what I hear him saying in the light of the language of the Bible is that infants clearly belong in the new covenant, because the validity of the sacrament rests upon the integrity of the one who's sign it is, namely God....

The point I want to make is this: if two pagans come to this church and say baptize our babies, we're not allowed to do that. At least one of them, following 1 Corinthians, must make a profession of faith. Now suppose it's a bogus profession of faith. We can't read the heart. But if that person is a member of the church, makes a profession of faith, is a member in good standing living in accord with God's Word, and brings [his or her] child for baptism, we baptize [him or her].

Ecclesiology: R. C. Sproul on the Implications of 1 Corinthians 7:12-17, and especially 7:14, for Baptizing Children

Let's not lose sight of the critical point here: the covenant community status of the children of at least one believer. I don't think there is any doubt about that in the New Testament, that our children have covenant privilege. Now the whole question then becomes, if they are included in the covenant, why in the world would you not give them the sign of the covenant? The whole reason the sign of the covenant was given to infants in the Old Testament was because that was the sign that they were included in the covenant, and if God is going to stop including infants in the covenant community, you would think that that silence would suddenly become a screaming change.

We know that the Old Testament laws that have been abrogated, are abrogated by specific new teaching in the New Testament. To me the biggest problem the Baptist has is the silence of the New Testament. They want to argue that a principle that God initiates and institutes throughout the whole of Old Testament redemptive history suddenly is set apart in the New Testament, set aside and without a word. It's repealed and nothing is said about it. I submit to you that 1 Corinthians assumes the continuity of inclusion of infants. [EDS Note: This continuity is clearly indicated in such texts as Luke 22:20 (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:25; Jeremiah 31:31-35, [38:31 LXX]), by the original Greek word, *καινός* (*kainos*), which means new in nature or in quality, i.e., renewed; Jesus does not use the other main word for new, *νέος* (*neos*), which means new in time or in origin, i.e., brand new. In 22:20, Jesus' says, "This cup is the new (*kainos*) covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you," clearly linking his new covenant with the covenant with Abraham, which commanded that infants receive the covenant sign. (Genesis 17:12)]

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:1-6)
- “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)
- “he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,” (Titus 3:5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

7] What do we say to people who were baptized as infants, who want to be rebaptized as adults?

- a] Ephesians 4:5 indicates there is now one baptism that unites all in Christ Jesus. (See also John 3:5-6; Romans 6:3-4; Acts 19:4-6) All have been baptized into Christ, not into one or more church leaders, e.g., Paul (1 Corinthians 1:13).
- b] The Greek aorist (past) tense of key verbs in texts pertaining to baptism (e.g., 1 Corinthians 6:11 and Titus 3:5) inclines me to think that another application of “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5 can mean it is not intended to be repeated. Once is sufficient.
- c] The same aorist tense of related verbs in 1 Corinthians 6:11, made holy and justified, which don’t need to be repeated, along with washed, suggest the same about baptism.

R. C. Sproul Explains Further Why No Rebaptism

Many Protestants...say, "Well if baptism doesn't automatically convey the grace, why do it? What's the big deal? The big deal is the promise of God, whose promise for all who believe all these marvelous blessings is signified by a sign that our Lord instituted and commanded to be taken to all nations. I know...that I am saved and when Satan comes to assault me I can look at the Devil and say, "I am baptized." That is, I can show him the sign of the promise of God. When I say that, what I am saying is this, "I trust in this promise, Satan, and it's God's promise, and if it's God's promise, though my faith is fallible, my faith is fragile, the promise of God cannot be broken." And so I hold on to the pledge of that promise that is mine in baptism. This is the point the church hasn't gotten.

People come to me all the time and say, "I was baptized as an infant, and all these things were symbolized to me, I was unaware of it, I didn't know anything about it, and now I've come to faith, and would you baptize me now when it means something to me?" And I say, "Not on your life!" "Why?" "I don't want to commit blasphemy!" "What?!" "Look, I know that nobody ever came up to me thinking it this way. But I say, here's what you're doing: when you were baptized the first time, you received an outward sign of the promise of God for all of these things. And now that you've come to faith, did God keep his promise? Are you now born again?" "Yes." "Are you now a member of the new covenant?" "Yes." "Do you now enjoy in the sight of God a personal identification with Jesus Christ?" "Yes." "Do you now participate in the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ?" "Yes." And we go through all these things. Then I say, "What part of that promise has God failed to keep?" "Well, no part." "OK, so then 25 years ago, when it meant nothing to you, you were given the sign of a promise of God. Now God in time and space fulfills every aspect of that promise to you, and you want me to say to God, 'Run by me that again?! I'm not sure you meant it?!'" "No." Do you hear what I'm saying? Nobody intends that when they ask to be rebaptized; they're looking for a spiritual experience. I understand that. And I explain that to them. But I want you to understand why I will not do it. I rather want to take this opportunity for you to understand how blessed you are that that sign that you had outwardly has now been realized inwardly and now you are living proof of the trustworthiness of the promises of God."

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- Even the baptism of John had a causative effect. “(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. ³⁰But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)” (Luke 7:29-30)
- “he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,” (Titus 3:5)
- “let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:22)
- “and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” (1 Peter 3:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

- 8] Passages such as Titus 3:5 indicate that through baptism the Lord working through the Holy Spirit regenerates and renovates us. But the question next arises, how and when does this rebirth and renewal occur?
 - a] Here is where true believers differ as to the interpretation of the Bible's related texts. We can say what follows.
 - b] From our study of the texts in the left column, and the other preceding passages, baptism is much more than just a symbol, and the regeneration that it symbolizes does not occur automatically; the Holy Spirit is the main agent, and we saw in the Bible passages, he comes before, during, and after baptism. (Cf. Acts 10:44; 19:1-7; 8:14-17.)
 - c] **The Holy Spirit makes baptism and all it signifies a very powerful means of grace.**

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” (1 Corinthians 5:7)
- For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.²They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.³They all ate the same spiritual food⁴and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)
- “The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,²⁴and when he had given thanks [*< εὐχαριστέω (eucharisteō)*], he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new [*< καινός (kainos)*] covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- As baptism replaces circumcision in the new covenant, so also the Lord's Supper replaces the Passover feast. The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist, the Lord's Table, the Breaking of Bread, and Holy Communion.

The following statement in the Eastern Orthodox tradition explains well the connection between Passover and the Lord's Supper. “The Christian eucharist is a meal specifically connected with the Passover meal of the Old Testament. At the end of his life Christ, the Jewish Messiah, ate the Passover meal with his disciples. Originally a ritual supper in commemoration of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the Passover meal was transformed by Christ into an act done in remembrance of him: of His life, death and resurrection as the new and eternal Passover Lamb who frees men from the slavery of evil, ignorance and death and transfers them into the everlasting life of the Kingdom of God.” (<https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-sacraments/holy-eucharist> [Accessed May 20, 2019])

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Then God said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. ¹⁰This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.’” (Genesis 17:9–11)
- “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.” (Romans 4:11)
- “The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks [*εὐχαριστέω (eucharisteō)*], he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [*καίνος (kainos)*] covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.’” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called Holy Communion.

4] The sacraments are signs and seals of our membership in the covenant. (Cf. Genesis 17:11; Romans 4:11)

b] What is sealed by the Lord's Supper? Berkhof explains, “These two aspects of the sacrament [signs and seals] are closely related. The sacrament as a sign or with all that it signifies constitutes a seal. The seal is attached to the thing signified and is a pledge of its realization.” (325) He lists four seals.

- 1] It seals to the participant the great love of Christ revealed in His self-surrender to a bitter and shameful death as a ransom payment for our sins.
- 2] It gives the believing partaker of the sacrament the assurance that all the promises of the covenant and all the riches of the gospel offer are his or hers.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “After taking the cup, he gave thanks [\langle εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)] and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ ¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ ²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [\langle καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” (Luke 22:17-20)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- 4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.
- 4] The sacraments are signs and seals of Biblical realities. (Cf. Romans 4:11) What are they in the Lord's Supper?
 - b] What is sealed by the Lord's Supper? Berkhof sees four seals.
 - 3} It even assures the believing participant that the blessings of salvation are his or hers in actual possession.
 - 4} It is a badge of profession on the part of those who partake of the sacrament in faith. They profess their faith in Christ as their Saviour, and their allegiance to Him as their King, and solemnly pledge a life of obedience to His divine commandments. (325)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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- “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [*κοινωνία (koinonia)*] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [*koinōnia*] of the body of Christ? ¹⁷For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17 KJV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- 4.d.2))2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the **Eucharist** and Holy Communion.
- 5] The celebration of the Lord's Supper engages all five of our senses: taste, touch, smell, sight, and hearing.
 - 6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning: past, present, and future.
 - a] Holy Communion points to the past.
 - 1} Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me.”
 - a} The acme of Jesus' mission to be a **propitiation** (op cit.), redeeming human beings and his Creation, was done in history and linked with the old covenant, here Passover, all pointing to the cross.
 - 1> Too much of the church today has lost this crucial understanding of the seriousness of human sin in God's sight.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “After taking the cup, he gave thanks [*< εὐχαριστέω (eucharisteō)*] and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ ¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ ²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [*< καινός (kainos)*] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” (Luke 22:17-20)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

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- 6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning: past, present, and future.
- a] Holy Communion points to the past.
- 1} Jesus: “in remembrance of me.”
- a} We must remember the acme of Jesus' mission to be a **propitiation, removing God's righteous wrath against our sin**. Remember also, to **understand God's wrath against human sin, review his characteristics, especially his being holy, holy, holy**.
- 2> Remembering with at least a wince what Jesus did for us to satisfy God's wrath due to us, causes great thanksgiving, **Eucharist**, to burst forth from the depths of our soul.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”
(Romans 5:1-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the **Eucharist** and Holy Communion.

6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning: past, present, and future.

a] Holy Communion points to the past.

1] Jesus: “in remembrance of me.”

a] Remember also, **to understand God's wrath against human sin, review his characteristics, especially his being holy, holy, holy.**

3> Ironically, the church today in wanting to ignore God's righteous wrath and focus only on love, by failing to keep God's wrath against sin in the picture, we don't see many benefits of his love for which we long so greatly, especially the huge meaning of the Father's and the Son's love for us in Jesus' passion!

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

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 - 1} Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me.”
 - a} The acme of Jesus' mission to be a **propitiation**, redeeming human beings and his Creation, was done in history and linked with the old covenant, here Passover, all pointing to the cross.
 - b} Jesus ratified the covenant God made with Abraham and at the same time renewed (*kainos*) it in his body and blood.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “After taking the cup, he gave thanks [*< εὐχαριστέω (eucharisteō)*] and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ ¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ ²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [*< καινός (kainos)*] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” (Luke 22:17-20)
- When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵And he said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.’” (Luke 22:14-15)
- “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [*κοινωνία (koinonia)*] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [*koinōnia*] of the body of Christ? ¹⁷For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17 KJV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- 4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord’s Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.
- 6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning.
- a] Holy Communion points to the past.
- 1} Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me.”
- d} Jesus’ great emotion, translated, “I have eagerly desired (to eat this Passover with you...)” is literally “with desire I desired.” Lenski explains that this is a figure of speech to emphasize intensity: it’s “regarded as a Hebraism (infinitive absolute) although the Greek, too, uses the cognate noun or participle for intensifying the verb (R. 531): ‘with great desire.’” (1041)
- e} “With you,” is theologically very significant.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

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- 6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning.
- a] Holy Communion points to the past.
- 1} Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me.”
- e} “With you,” is theologically very significant.
- 1> He refers here to his human emotional need to be with his closest friends, especially during a traumatic time, another indication of his humanity. As we studied in the Christology section and others, Jesus had to be 100% human as well as 100% divine. Here is more poignant and gripping evidence of Jesus’ being human as well as divine.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵And he said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.’ ¹⁷After taking the cup, he gave thanks [*< εὐχαριστέω (eucharisteō)*] and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ ¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ ²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [*< καινός (kainos)*] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” (Luke 22:14-20)
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- “Then the angel said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!”’ And he added, ‘These are the true words of God.’” (Revelation 19:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord’s Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning.

b] Holy Communion points to the future.

1} Jesus’ statement that he “will not eat [the Passover] again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God,” refers to his doing so in the future, when the kingdom of God, which is here in part (Luke 17:21), comes in its fullest, when Christ brings all things to completion in the great Messianic “wedding supper of the Lamb!” (Revelation 19:9)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “After taking the cup, he gave thanks [$\epsilon\upsilon\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ (*eucharisteō*)] and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ ¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ ²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [$\kappa\alpha\iota\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” (Luke 22:17-20)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- 4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.
- 6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning.
 - b] Holy Communion points to the future.
 - 2} We see in God's Word that when we celebrate the Lord's Supper we are publicly witnessing in word and in deed to the wonderful Gospel message of Jesus' death “until he comes,” thus also to his Second Coming. (1 Corinthians 11:26).
 - 3} As Sproul puts it, “so every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we don't just think about the past, but we remember that there's a future for the people of God and that we are having a foretaste at the Lord's Table of that ultimate fellowship that we'll have with him in heaven.”

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “After taking the cup, he gave thanks [$\epsilon\upsilon\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ (*eucharisteō*)] and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ ¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ ²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [$\kappa\alpha\iota\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” (Luke 22:17-20)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2))2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning.

c] Holy Communion points to the present. Feenstra says, it's “spiritual food for the spiritual journey...like manna in the wilderness, God provides spiritual sustenance in the form of a sacramental meal—a meal that serves as a means of grace to sustain us along the spiritual journey from slavery to sin to new life in Christ.” (*Forum*, Fall 2017, p. 8)

There is not much debate in the church about the meaning of the Lord's Supper for the past and the future, but considerable debate continues about the meaning of the Lord's Supper in the present, both pertaining to the meaning of certain Bible texts and to the manner of celebrating Communion.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

What is the church? Why should I attend?

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

The church is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27); he is its head (Ephesians 5:23). Jesus said even “the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 15:28). It is nothing like any other organization.

The church first appears in the Old Testament in God’s implementing his covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 17; Galatians 3:26-29), and throughout the New Testament its mission is described and commanded. Further, the church is the people of Christ, not a building, and many of the people use the Internet for the purpose of trying to accomplish the mission Christ gave his church; yet, the Internet is a means the church can use to serve the Lord, but it is not a replacement or a substitute for his body. Thus, the church will always exist, and it is always needed, even by people who don’t feel such a need.

God’s Word clearly states that we should worship him regularly. Jesus himself did and provided such an example for us to follow. In Luke 4:16 we read that Jesus on the Sabbath day “went into the synagogue, *as was his custom.*” (Italics mine) Even Jesus worshiped regularly. In his human nature he obeyed his parents (Luke 2:52), and he “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” (Luke 2:52) In Hebrews 10:25 the writer exhorts his readers, “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” That “meeting together” involved worship and the special fellowship God’s people have with each other called *koinōnia*, a great blessing, including encouragement.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

Regular attendance at church worship gives us a disciplined means of praising God. We can and should ask the person who says he or she “would rather worship God in my garden [or in the woods or on the beach as is also said],” “But do you? Even if your premise were correct (that God would be just as pleased to have his children worship him individually instead of corporately, which premise cannot be defended from the Bible, his Word), do you in fact worship him on Sunday mornings (the day Christians all over the world from the first century have witnessed to the Lord’s Resurrection by their corporate worship) or any other time each Sunday?”

Through corporate worship we human beings, who are weak and constantly tempted to become distracted by and involved in other matters than worship, have a strong and healthy discipline to join with our brothers and sisters in Christ and praise and worship in other ways the owner and ruler of the universe who has performed the most wonderful demonstration of love for us ever!

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

Though the church sometimes has members and attendees who are spiritual infants in elementary stages of sanctification, not yet mature in Christ (Ephesians 4:11-24), and not treating all others of every race in a loving Christlike manner, it is clear in this passage and throughout the whole Bible, that such behavior does not please God and is not in accord with his will.

Further, Jesus Christ, whom we worship with the other two Members of our triune God, with whom we identify, and proclaim, is not an Anglo-Saxon. He is not “a white guy;” he is (and will forever be in his already resurrected fully human body) a Person of color.

➤ *Thus, the church can never rightly be accused of “systemic racism” or of being inherently racist. Clearly, God has called the church to lovingly reach out to all people and invite them into his kingdom.*

That reality is also true individually as well as corporately. I know and have worked with many Christians of every color who are not at all racist. Christian missionaries of every color are called by God to live in lands as far as half the world away from where they were born and raised and where their parents, other family members, and beloved friends continue to live. If they were racists, what would explain their leaving these loved ones to live with another race? It certainly is not for money. Believe them when they explain they are responding to their call, which is part of the great commission of the Lord to “go and make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:19)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

What is the church? Why should I become a member?

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I join?*

The following are reasons for church membership drawn from the wisdom of the historic church through the ages. In addition, I've included findings of social science research, e.g., informing us of basic human needs that are met most fully by membership in the church, which the New Testament reveals and explains is the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 12:5; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:12; Colossians 1:18,24. See also above.)

The unconnected private life is neither personally fulfilling nor God's plan for us. Especially in Western society, which is highly imbued with individualism, even to the extent of narcissism, exceptions to the contrary notwithstanding, most people are inclined to think primarily in terms of themselves. Even for those who have come to faith in Christ Jesus, many think that being saved, and thus qualified for heaven, is all they need. However, that view runs counter to what we read throughout the Bible; there we see that salvation is always for service for God. As one Christian leader said long ago, if qualifying for heaven were all that were needed, a believer would be immediately transported to heaven; the fact that he or she is still here is an indication that God has more in mind for us. We are saved to serve. And when we do serve, for example by calling on a church member in the hospital, it is a lot easier for us, is much less awkward, and means much more to the other person if we can introduce ourselves as a fellow member of the church.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I join?*

*Church membership meets and satisfies humankind's deepest needs and longings, including the need to be loved and to belong. We sense keenly that we belong to God and to one another in the special fellowship in the Holy Spirit the Bible calls *koinōnia*. We also learn how to give and receive this love more effectively.*

Both on the horizontal and on the vertical level we need to belong and engage with other people and with God, our Creator. Pertaining to human interaction, Cleveland Clinic M.D., Raul Seballos, writes, “not having face-to-face interaction with other adults can become a major health risk. Studies show that a lack of social contact can lead to higher blood pressure, heart disease, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline and even early death, regardless of previous underlying issues...Along with engaging socially, stimulating your mind can lower your risk of dementia. Plan for obligations and activities with others that fuel a sense of purpose...” While such general activities as volunteering and computer-based programs like Facebook or LinkedIn can help, think about the far greater benefits that come with membership in the church, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27. See also above for additional text references.) that includes engaging in the Great Commission the Lord Jesus Christ gave to his people! (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-32)

As members of the body of Christ, we have the most special relationship of all in our connection with God. *We experience and grow in our sense of what it means to belong to God. We even catch a glimpse of what it means to belong to something, and especially Someone, so huge that it (creation) and he (God) are beyond containment!*

In God's worship we learn that we are in the presence of God who is not only holy but holy, holy, holy, which is the Biblical way of saying, Most Holy (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8) and all love. (1 John 4:8) We come to worship to meet the one true God, who is triune: the Father; his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit, three distinct Persons who share one substance. Since God is redeeming his creation in and through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; since God has put all things under the feet of Christ (Psalm 8:6; 1 Corinthians 15:25-27; Ephesians 1:22; Hebrews 2:8); and since we come into the presence of God only in Christ, (John 14:6) we fix our eyes on Jesus in our worship. We learn to sense more of his presence in worship, to grow ever closer to him, and to serve him in the high and holy calling he is giving us. In worship, which is true to God's Word, we enter God's presence with Jesus and grow in our relationship with the risen and reigning Christ! And we are doing so with the church triumphant, our fellow faithful loved ones and others in Christ who are already with him! (Revelation 4-5)

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I join?*

Part of what it means to be created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-28) is that we are social beings. We are created to be in fellowship with one another. We help one another by being in relationship with each other and in the ensuing interactions that take place. Left alone in isolation from others, especially fellow believers in Christ, we are vulnerable to the residue of sin in our nature and to the oppression of Satan and his demonic forces, which can have severe negative effects on us that are counterproductive not only to our mission to which God has called us, but also to the joy he wants us to have. (See, e.g., Galatians 5:22; Romans 15:13.) Alone, our minds play tricks on us, but those tricks are exposed, put in perspective, and overcome through relating to God's people through whom he works for our benefit. We need ongoing fellowship with the church, God's people in Christ, the body of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, in order to "be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18) and live life in Christ Jesus to the fullest (John 10:10), including accomplishing a more healthy and effective service for the Lord which is our calling, our vocation.

And our brothers and sisters in Christ need us. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2) Paul was emphasizing how important Christ is; without Christ we lose everything. ***We need to know Christ, that is, to have a relationship with him, not just know about him, which involves the sincere and ongoing desire and goal to please our Lord (2 Corinthians 5:9), obeying him, and making him known to others.*** This is who we are, our identity and our calling, our vocation. (Refer to our study of [Soteriology](#).) Christ Jesus is our greatest blessing, and we are called to give this good news to others, beginning in our families. I have tried to do this every day of our lives together, and I want to continue to do so after God calls me home, beginning with my funeral. I've said verbally and in writing that I want the whole service to be and focus on Christ. Paul also urged the church in Ephesus (and of course all churches including us) "to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." (3:19)

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I join?*

Marriages are strengthened and maintained, especially for those who were married in the church. For those who were married with a traditional liturgy, they took their vows “before God and these witnesses.” A considerable percentage of the witnesses were members of that church with whom the couple is still in a relationship, and the couple is accountable to them if they don’t live up to those vows. *They are especially accountable to God. For those couples who now are part of another church, their present congregation serves to help them stay on the right path.* (See for example, Leviticus 19:17b; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:15; James 5:19-20.)

The children of a married couple are also blessed together with their mother and dad. Families are strengthened and blessed in countless ways, each family member individually, and the whole family together corporately. Each person experiences the work of the Holy Spirit in his or her mind and heart directly during worship and in other activities, as well as indirectly through brothers and sisters in Christ in the life and work of the church, for example in conversations while working together on a service project, at choir or music team practice, when being visited in the hospital, or in Bible study, youth groups, and Sunday school classes. *When children hear other adults voicing and living the same values as their parents, they and their parents are all strengthened and encouraged.* Even in nursery little children experience the special love and caring of Holy Spirit-inspired believers in and followers of Jesus Christ. *If it has been a regular part of their lives, that special milieu facilitates the development of an “at home” feeling for which they will long if they are away from it as adults.*

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I join?*

Church membership facilitates doing work decently and in good order (1 Corinthians 14:40) and most effectively and efficiently, such as in national and international mission work. Even the U. S. federal government has recognized this reality and has sought the help of church organizations to accomplish the meeting of human needs where governments cannot, e.g., by asking international mission agencies to move supplies into areas of other countries to feed those who are starving, whereas by using government channels the supplies have been siphoned off into the black market and/or into private use by government officials and their friends, stolen by rebel raiders, or left to rot on the loading docks, illustrating the differences in the behavior and effects of the regenerate vs. the unregenerate mind and heart.

Similar situations involving human sin that thwart government efficiency and effectiveness exist also in the United States. Thus, the federal government has decided to use church organizations as a means of helping people here in this country as well.

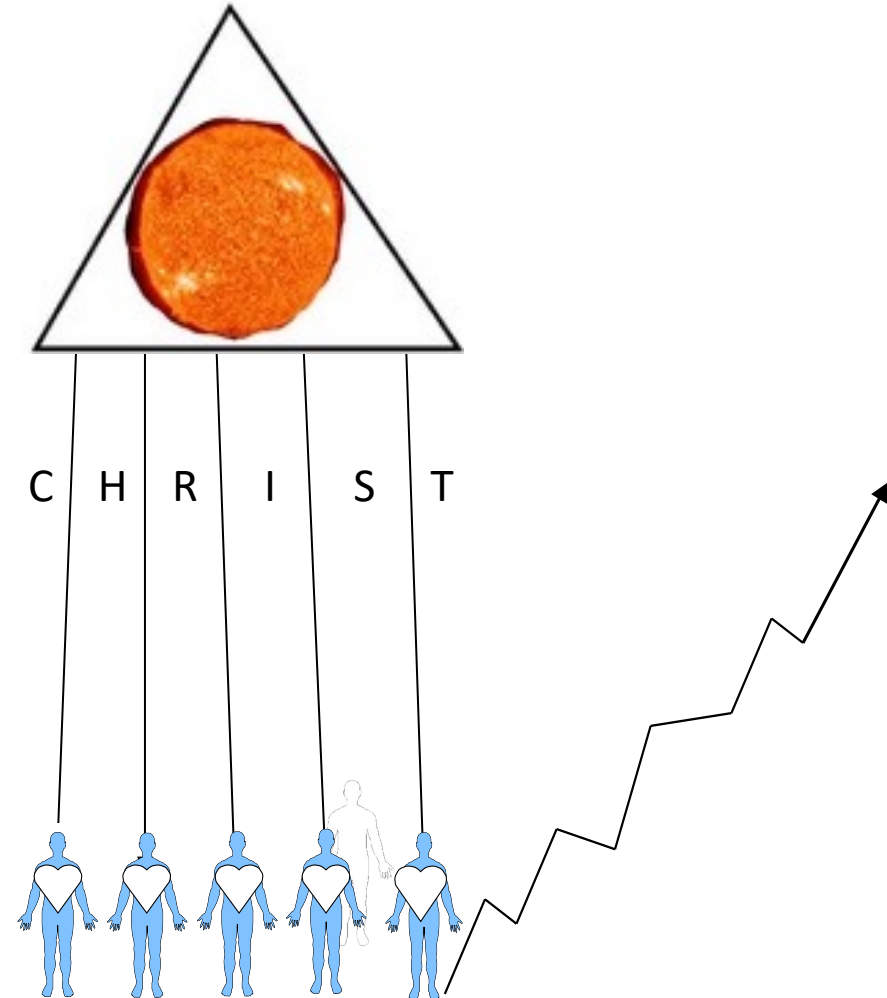
The many services provided by global and stateside missions cannot be done by an individual, and without the corporate church, the body of Christ, such organizations would not exist to facilitate such accomplishment. If a group of people gathered together only to worship with no commitment to a permanent membership, such mission work would not likely occur and not likely as effectively and over the desirable extended timeframe. Denominations bring together the vast resources of many churches, including the gifts the Lord has given to their members, effectively and efficiently coordinating the individual efforts. Interdenominational collaboration and cooperation empowered by the Holy Spirit accomplishes great outcomes.

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

Question for Reflection and Discussion

What do you say to young adults who say, “Jesus, Yes; church No; I don’t need the church?”

[If time: Start in groups of four, then debrief in the large group. If time is short: begin in dyads, then ask for volunteers to share with the whole group what they think.]



For More Information

In order to facilitate course preparation, the slides in this presentation on Biblical Ecclesiology have been selected from the larger [overview](#) of Ecclesiology, which itself has been drawn from the Ecclesiology section of the original and unabridged version of the PowerPoint program (PPT), [*Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including God’s Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity.*](#)

This abridged PPT is still larger than can be covered in an average one-class session, particularly in the West. Therefore, highlighting of especially essential parts is offered to help when time is very limited.

For further information about the subjects on the Ecclesiology slides in this abridged program, see the additional slides in the Ecclesiology section that are on the original and unabridged presentation, which is located on the [Christian Theology](#) page of the author’s free and secure [general Website](#). See also other documents on the Christian Theology page that supply additional information.