VII. Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology)

A. Meaning and use of the word "Church"

1. **Origin of the term “church” (ekklesia)**
   * Ekklesia is a compound of two words: еκ (out) and καλεω (to call, summon)
   * It refers to those who have been called out of, summoned, or set apart.
   * The main focus is on people, not building.

2. **Development of the term “ekklesia”**
   * Originally, “ekklesia” only had a secular use.
   * It referred to the assembly of citizens, summoned by the town crier to a meeting to make legislative decisions, but was also used of any kind of gathering or assemblies (Examples: gathered for war, civic affairs, gathering of angels etc.)
   * The NT usage of the word moves toward a more specialized use of the phrase of "called out ones".
   * It begins to mean the Christian connotation of "Christian Community".
   * It is used to identify the local assembly of those who profess faith in Jesus as well as to identify the universal church.
   * The definition seems to move from a limited local/physical church to a spiritual church (Acts 8:1; Eph; Col.)
   * So we can see that there has been an evolution of the term: first it referred to any assembly, then to the local assembly/church, and finally to the universal church.
   * It is never used in the NT to describe a building, denomination or state church.

B. Nature of the Church

* The church is a multi-faceted, organism.
* The NT gives many pictures/images that help illustrate the nature of the church.
* For example: Paul described the church as the body of Christ.
* Brainstorm: What other NT descriptions of the church can you think of?
* We’ll discuss a sampling of these pictures to give us an idea of the richness of the church.

1. **People of God**
   * The church is God's assembly--the elect of God.
   * The church is people called by God, incorporated into Christ and indwelt by HS.
   * We are members of Christ who enjoy fellowship with the Holy Spirit.
   * We use many terms to describe God’s people: believers, disciples, faithful, Christians, saints, brethren, etc.

2. **Body of Christ**
   * Paul provides the metaphor between the church and the body of Christ.
   * The picture refers to one universal church under the headship of Jesus Christ, more than just a local church location.
   * Members of the body are individual people, not groups of people.
   * Paul stresses 3 important features of the body: Unity, diversity, mutuality.
     * Unity: There are many members, but one body.
     * Diversity: One body has many members.
     * Mutuality: One body with many members are mutually dependent upon each other for our common good.
   * Christ is the head of the body.
As head He is sovereign leader, the source of life, and our sustenance.

3. Temple/Building
* Paul also describes the church as a temple or a building.
* The church is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10ff)
* (The church is built on the work of the apostles and prophets only to the extent that their message was Jesus Christ - Eph. 2:20; 4).
* Jesus is the cornerstone of this building Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6
* "We are the stones," the "living stones" (1 Pet. 2:5).
* This building is being “fitted together…into a dwelling of God" (Eph. 2:19-22)
* Each of us (stone) builds directly upon the foundation--Jesus.
* We are continually being shaped/fit together in relationship to the other stones.
* We are "growing into the Holy Temple in the Lord." (Eph. 2:21-22)
* The Lord dwells here. It is the habitation of the Lord.

4. Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22)
* The NT describes the deep love of the Bridegroom (Christ) for his bride (church)
* The bridegroom's activity toward His bride (church) is dynamic and creative, making her what she needs to be for her benefit.
* The bride is called to reciprocate His love (1 Jn. 4:19; Matt. 6:24; Eph. 5:24)
* We are to be loyal to Christ.
* Completely faithful, "no spot or wrinkle; holy & blameless"
* Our ultimate "marriage" is to come. It has yet to be realized.

5. Flock/Good Shepherd (John 10; Ps. 23)
* We are God's flock--we belong to Him.
* He created us and we were purchased with a price. (1 Pet 5:2; Jn 10:11, 27-30)
* Christ is the good shepherd to his flock (John 10)
  * He cares for the flock
  * He knows his flock
  * He provides pasture (rest) for his flock
  * He leads the flock
  * He searches for lost members of his flock
  * He guards his flock
  * He goes before the sheep and prepares the way
* Just as sheep are totally dependent on the shepherd, the church is to be totally dependent on God.

6. Vine and Branches (John 15)
* God is the vine and we are the branches.
* In this organic union, the branch depends on the vine for its life.
* Life flows from vine to branch.
* Branches have a choice, and must choose to abide/stay in the vine (Christ).
* The power to grow and reproduction is through vine to the branch.
* A branch severed from the vine cannot bear fruit.
* Reproduction/fruit characterizes a healthy life
* Branch which bears fruit will be pruned so it can bear more fruit.

C. The Purpose of the Church

1. To be an agency of God for evangelizing the world
* The church helps Christians grow in their faith, one of the natural results will be sharing that faith with others.
* The church can encourage believers to share their faith, and even help provide
evangelism opportunities for believers to reach out to others.
* Many times, the combined efforts of the body can enable believers to do what
  they would never have been able to do on their own.
* See Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16: 15-16

2. To be a corporate body in which man may worship God
* Provide opportunity for the body to Christ to corporately worship (1 Cor. 12:13)
* There’s something powerful & dynamic when we worship together w/other believers

3. To be a channel which assists believers in Christian growth
* The church exists to train believers in the Word, and in the basic elements of
  Christian growth (Eph. 4:11f; 1 Cor. 12:28; 14:12).
* The goal is the perfecting of the saints into the image of Christ.
* Christian discipleship is an important function of the body of Christ.

D. Ministry of the Church

1. Foundation: All members of the Church are Ministers
* The NT reveals a sharp contrast from the pattern of the OT.
* In the OT, ministry was relegated to select group, but in NT ministry is for all.
* Every member of the church is a minister (1 Cor. 12).
* I’m afraid we often set up too great a division between clergy/laity--this is not a
  healthy biblical picture.

2. Nature of Ministry
* The best understanding of ministry can be seen in the example of Jesus: servant.
* He taught and exemplified this (footwashing) (Mark 10:42-45).
* The picture of the early church is also one of service:
  * doulos: slave/servant Rom. 1:1.
  * leitourgos: Priestly service to God (Giving to those in need Rom 15:27).
  * diakonia: describes the service of a table waiter. Selfless, loving service.

3. General Types of Ministries
* God seems to gift some people with more permanent or “resident” giftings.

  a. Apostles (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 2:20)
  * One sent forth to found and lead churches in unevangelized areas.
  * Ability to assume and exercise leadership over churches with an
    extraordinary authority in spiritual matters which is recognized and
    appreciated by those churches.
  * This term was used first in an official restricted sense, and later in an
    unofficial broader sense.
  * Today, we can still use the term in a broader sense, referring to one
    who has been sent forth.
  * They would say that today’s equivalent in function is a missionary.
  * Linguistically, missionary and apostles are the same.
    * Apostle comes from the Latin “to send”
    * Missionary comes from the Greek “to send”
  * Missionaries who go into unevangelized areas and start new churches
    function in the same way as the biblical understanding of the term.

  b. Prophets (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28,29)
* A person who speaks to God’s people under the inspiration of the HS.
* While all Spirit-filled Christians could potentially operate in this gift, scripture implies that there were some who regularly functioned this way.
* He/she is a spokesperson for God. (More than simply preaching.)
* They may foretell (predict future) or forthtell (bring forth word of God).

c. Evangelist (Eph. 4:11)
* One whose single focus is preaching the gospel with the intent of making converts (Acts 21:8 Philip; 2 Tim. 4:5)
* Their primary task is to communicate the gospel in relevant terms to unbelievers; proclaiming effectively so that people respond to the claims of Christ in conversion.
* Some feel this is more like what we call the missionary of our day, rather than what we think of as an evangelist.
* See also: 2 Tim. 4:5; Acts 8:5-6; 8:26-40; 14:21; 21:8

d. Pastors (Eph. 4:11)
* Elder/pastor/overseer/bishop are synonymous
* One charged with the guidance, shepherdng and instruction of local congregations.
* They assume long-term personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers.
* This office is combined with that of teacher, which shows the close relationship. A pastor (shepherd) will feed his flock.
* They function as a shepherd to the flock
* They function under the chief shepherd. Pastor should not feel that he is the pastor of that church.
* They do not minister for gain, or to lord it over others (1 Pt 5:1-5)
* There are many qualifications for this office (1Tm 3:2-7 Tit. 1:5f)
* See also John 10:1-18; 1 Pet. 5:1-3

e. Teacher (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28,29)
* One who is charged with instructing the church in the known truths of God (the Bible).
* To be able to understand and present truths in such a way that people will learn.
* There were some who regularly gave teachings in the communities.
* This office is sometimes combined with that of pastor (Eph. 4:11).
* This shows the close relationship. A shepherd will feed his flock.

* In addition to these more “full time” ministries, there are many ways in which God gifts people for various ministries.

f. Deacons
* Minister assisting the pastor
* Administer church’s programs (Acts 6), and assist the church in practical and material ways.
* 1 Tim. 3:8-13 lists qualifications.
* Rm 16:1-Grk diakono seems to imply/allow women deaconesses
* The lines between pastor & deacon are not always clear cut.
* Generally, pastor more preaching/teaching, spiritual shepherding
* Generally, deacons more material needs, business and finances.

g. Many miscellaneous giftings
  * Scriptures lists many ways in which God equips people to minister.
  * Gifts of helps, administration, leadership, serving, etc.

E. Ordinances of the Church
  * Why do we call them ordinances instead of sacraments?
  * A sacrament is used to denote a worship observance in which grace is communicated.
  * We choose to see grace not communicated through any observance.
  * Rather, ordinances are things we simply do in obedience to expectations of Christ.

1. Lord's Supper

   a. Why do we observe the Lord’s supper?
      * It was instituted by the Lord.
      * Jesus both commanded it and modeled it.
      * See Mt. 26:17ff; Mk 14:12ff; Luke 22:7ff; 1Cor. 11:23

   b. What is the meaning of the Lord’s supper?
      * This is an act of remembrance.
      * The Lord’s Supper is the act of recalling of the past so as to become a present reality in which one may share.

         (1) We remember Christ’s death.
         * The elements force us to (wine-blood; bread-body).
         * We have a powerful reminder of His salvation.

         (2) We remember in anticipation of His return.
         * Do this until I come (1 Cor. 11:26).

         (3) We remember our present fellowship with Christ.
         * He will be at the table to fellowship with us.
         * He is the very substance of the meal.
         * How is this interpreted?

            (a) Roman Catholic: Transubstantiation
            * This means that the elements actually change into the literal body and blood of the Lord. Metaphysical body of the Lord.
            * Problem: Christ said: "This is my body/blood" while he was still present physically on earth.
            * In their culture figurative language is very common.
            * The disciples understood this and needed no explanation.

            (b) Lutherans: Consubstantiation
            * Martin Luther, in a 1529 debate with Zwingli declared:
            * The presence of Christ is -in, with and under-the elements.
            * No metaphysical change occurs.
            * It is still bread and juice, but Christ's presence is in it.
            * But this is really just playing word games.
            * It doesn't really move away from transubstantiation.
(c) **Zwingly: Memorial/Spiritual Presence of Christ**
* The presence of Christ is not literally present, but is spiritually present at the participation of the Lord's supper.
* It is a memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection.
* They remind us about the presence of Christ.
* Danger: May not take seriously enough the presence of Christ.

(d) **Calvinist: Seeing Christ Present in the Spirit.**
* More than a memorial meal, but it is coming into contact with the Christ in the presence of the Holy Spirit.
* The Spirit of Christ makes Christ real to the believers at the time of partaking of the elements.

c. **Who can participate in the Lord's Supper?**
* Believers, as part of the church's observance
* Believers who have examined themselves (I Cor. 11:28)
* Examine our growth, attitudes, motivations and relationships.
  * Believers who are assembled together.
  * It is a testimony of unity and community.
  * Show comic: *Do you have any wafers that are nacho cheese flavored?*

2. **Water Baptism**

a. **Why do we practice water baptism?**
* Christian baptism has been followed since John baptized Jesus.
* This baptism was unique from that practiced in Judaism.
* Jews could be self-baptized, and it was often repeated.
* But Jesus, even though he had no sin, he set the example for us.
* Baptism is in the Commands of Jesus (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15; Acts 3:8)
* Since then the church has been obedient to practice baptism.
  * Show comic: *“No, it’s call baptism, not a slam dunk.”*

b. **What is the meaning of water baptism?**
* We practice water baptism to symbolize the saving work that Christ has done in our lives.
* We are not saved by water baptism; it is simply a sign of the operation of God/forgiveness of sin.
* The NT draws an analogy/comparison between baptism and washing or cleansing.
* It is a sign of removal of sin (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5)
* The NT draws an analogy/comparison of baptism and death/resurrection
* This testifies that they are not the person that they were before (Rom. 6:3)
* Not simply reformed, but a new life.

c. **Who can be water baptized?**
* Subjects for baptism must be believers.
* Must be believers able to make a response to the claims of faith.
* Some traditions argue for infant baptism.
* But baptism is not salvation in itself, rather its a sign of faith.
* If baptism is a sign, then faith is vital for baptism.
* Faith must be expressed by that individual-it cannot be expressed by
d. In what way should water baptism be done?

(1) Baptism by immersion
   * The Biblical language seems to demand immersion
   * "baptidzo" means to immerse, dip or submerge
   * Biblical examples of baptism appear to be by immersion (Acts 8)
   * Witness of Church History (Didache prescribes immersion)
   * Show comic: “OK, Who put the turtle in the baptistry?”
   * Sow comic: Just relax, I haven’t lost anyone yet.”

(2) Baptism by sprinkling
   * This entails sprinkling a small amount of water on the candidate.
   * Some take this view one step further and actual pour a limited amount of water poured over head (affusion).

* Show comic: 2 Ministers watering plants (sprinkling & immersion)
* Note: The importance of baptism is not in the mode but in the response to the grace of God and it is only a symbol of an inward experience.

* The significance lies in God's grace and obedience to Christ's command.