

Loris First Baptist Church
“52 Vital Doctrines of The Bible”

Doctrine #35 – The Church: Her Members

Note: Most information based on pages 236-241 of the book “Major Bible Themes” by Lewis Sperry Chaffer.

A. The Church As The Present Purpose of God

1. The church in the New Testament is revealed to be the central purpose of God in the present age.
2. In contrast with God’s purposes for individuals and nations of the Old Testament and a larger purpose for the nation of Israel, the church is revealed to be the company of believers formed of both Jew and Gentile who are called out of the world and joined together in one living union by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
3. In general, the concept of the church falls into two major categories.
 - a. The principle emphasis in the New Testament is on the church as an organism, a living union of “all” true believers in Christ.

NOTE: This is the distinctive truth that is presented beginning with the day of Pentecost, with the advent of the Spirit, and concluding with the coming of Christ for His church, in which the church will be caught up out of the world and taken to heaven.

- b. Another concept, however, is that of the local church or the organized church. A company of professing believers in any one locality or a group of such local assemblies.

1 Corinthians 1:2 “*To THE CHURCH of God IN CORINTH...”*

Galatians 1:2 “*...To THE CHURCHES IN GALATIA...”*

4. The word “church” is a translation of a Greek word “ekklesia” and is frequently used of any assembly or congregation of people whether gathered for religious or for political purposes.
 - a. The word actually means “called out ones.”
 - 1) In early Greece, cities were often ruled by pure democracy in which every citizen in the town would gather together to act upon matters of mutual interest.
 - 2) As they would be called out from their ordinary occupations to an assembly where they could vote, the word came to mean the result of being “called out”, or those who were thus assembled.

- b. This word is found frequently in the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament, to denote various assemblies in the Old Testament. It is used in a similar sense in such passages as Acts 7:38 and Acts 19:32, where the word is used simply of a crowd that had gathered.

Acts 7:38 *“This is he who was IN THE CONGREGATION in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us...”*

Acts 19:32 *“THE ASSEMBLY was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there.”*

- c. When used of “the church” as the body of Christ, however, it becomes a technical word referring to those called out of the world and joined together with a living union in Christ.

NOTE: This concept is not found in the Old Testament even though Israel sometimes was gathered together for religious purposes.

- d. The term when used of the saved applies specifically to the company of those who are saved in the present age whether on earth or in heaven.

B. The Church: A New Testament Revelation

- 1. Because the concept of a church formed of Jews and Gentiles alike—all of whom are saved and joined together by eternal life—is NOT found in the Old Testament, only the New Testament gives the divine revelation on this important subject.

- a. In the plan of God it was necessary for Christ to come first, to die on the cross, to be raised from the dead, and to ascend into heaven.

- b. With the advent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, however, it was possible for God to fulfill His purpose of having a special company of believers disregarding the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles and having their own place in the eternal purpose of God.

- 1) According to Acts 2, as confirmed by the experience of Cornelius in Acts 10, believers in Christ were baptized by the Spirit and became members one of another with the advent of the Holy Spirit.

1Corinthians 12:13 *“For we were ALL BAPTIZED by one Spirit INTO ONE BODY—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”*

- 2) From Pentecost on, as each believer became saved he became a member of the body of Christ, as was previously discussed in the doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit.

- 2. Once the church is complete and caught up in the Rapture into heaven, the divine purpose will return to the normal distinction between Jew and Gentiles who are saved in the period of trial following the Rapture and also in the millennial kingdom.

C. The Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God

1. In the present age, the Bible recognizes three major divisions of the human family—the Jew, the Gentile, and the church of God.

1 Corinthians 10:32 “Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God...”

2. Observing these distinctions are most important to understanding God’s present purpose.
 - a. The Jews, or the children of Israel, are that nation which sprang from Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob, and who, according to divine purpose and promise, are the chosen earthly people of God.
 - 1) This nation has been miraculously preserved to the present time and, according to prophecy, will yet be the dominant, glorified people of the earth in the coming kingdom age.

Isaiah 62:1-12 “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. YOU WILL BE A CROWN OF SPLENDOR IN THE LORD’S HAND, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married. As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you. I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest till He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth. The LORD has sworn by His right hand and by His mighty arm: ‘Never again will I give your grain as food for your enemies, and never again will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled; but those who harvest it will eat it and praise the LORD, and those who gather the grapes will drink it in the courts of my sanctuary.’ Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations. The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: ‘Say to the Daughter of Zion, See, your Savior comes! See, His reward is with Him, and His recompense accompanies him.’ THEY WILL BE CALLED THE HOLY PEOPLE, the Redeemed of the LORD; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted.”

- 2) The eternal promises of Jehovah to this people cannot be altered. These promises include
 - a) A national entity

Jeremiah 31:36 “‘Only if these decrees vanish from my sight,’ declares the LORD, ‘will the descendants of Israel EVER CEASE TO BE A NATION BEFORE ME.’”

b) A land

Genesis 13:14-15 *“The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, ‘Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. ALL THE LAND that you see I will give to you and your offspring FOREVER.”*

c) A throne

2 Samuel 7:13 *“He (offspring of David) is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish THE THRONE OF HIS KINGDOM FOREVER.”*

d) A king

Jeremiah 33:20-21 *“This is what the LORD says: ‘If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, then my covenant with David my servant—and my covenant with the Levites who are priests ministering before me—can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant TO REIGN ON HIS THRONE.”*

e) And a kingdom

2 Samuel 7:16 *“Your house and YOUR KINGDOM WILL ENDURE BEFORE ME; your throne will be established FOREVER.”*

- 3) In the faithfulness of God, their promises, which are primarily earthly in character, have been fulfilled to the present hour and will be fulfilled to all eternity; for each of these covenants is said to be everlasting in duration.
- 4) Four words describe the out-working of the divine purpose in this people—“chosen,” “scattered,” “gathered,” “blessed.”
 - a) It is obvious that they were chosen and are now scattered among all the nations of the earth.
 - b) They will yet be gathered and blessed.

Genesis 12:3 *“I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth WILL BE BLESSED THROUGH YOU.”*

Romans 11:25-29 *“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. AND SO ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED, as it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; He will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is MY COVENANT WITH THEM when I take away their sins.’ As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but AS FAR AS ELECTION IS CONCERNED, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for GOD’S GIFTS AND HIS CALL IS IRREVOCABLE.”*

- b. The Gentiles are that vast unnumbered company, excluding the Israelites, who have lived on the earth from Adam until now.
- 1) Apart from certain individuals, there is no record that during the period from Adam to Christ God sustained any special relation or extended any immediate promises to them.
 - 2) However, the prophecies of the Old Testament predict great earthly blessings to come upon the Gentiles in the yet future kingdom on the earth, and in the present age they partake alike with the Jews in the privileges of the Gospel.
- c. The church of God refers, not to the membership of organized churches, but to the whole company of the redeemed who will have been saved in the present age.
- 1) They are a distinct people because
 - a) All individuals in that company being born again enter the kingdom of God and are destined to be conformed to the image of Christ;

John 3:5 “*Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God UNLESS HE IS BORN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT.’*”

Romans 8:29 “*For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed TO THE LIKENESS OF HIS SON, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.*”

- b) They are no longer in Adam partaking of the ruin of the old creation, but are in Christ partaking in the new creation of all that Christ is in His resurrection life and glory;

2Corinthians 5:17 “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, HE IS A NEW CREATION; the old has gone, the new has come!*”

Ephesians 1:3 “*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms WITH EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING IN CHRIST.”*

Colossians 2:10 “*and YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN FULLNESS IN CHRIST, who is the head over every power and authority.*”

- c) In the sight of God, their nationality is changed, for they have come upon new ground where there is neither Jew or Gentile, but Christ is all in all;

Colossians 3:11 “*Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but CHRIST IS ALL, AND IS IN ALL.”*

- d) They are now citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:3), and all their promises, their possessions, and their position are heavenly (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

Philippians 3:20 “But OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ...”

Colossians 3:3 “For you died, and YOUR LIFE is now hidden with Christ IN GOD.”

Ephesians 1:3 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”

- 2) By so much this “heavenly people” are distinguished from all other people of the earth.

D. The Church Formed From Both Jews and Gentiles

1. The respective earthly positions of the Jews and the Gentiles have already been pointed out. To this it should be added that God, during the present age and for the purposes of grace, has placed both Jews and Gentiles upon a common ground:

- a. They are now said to be “under sin,” which means that they are now shut up to salvation by God’s grace alone.

Romans 3:9 “What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike ARE ALL UNDER SIN.”

- b. At the death of Christ the change in the divine program from the recognition of a favored nation to an appeal to individuals, Jews and Gentiles alike, was most difficult for the Jew to understand.

- 1) The orthodox Jew did not understand that his covenants were set aside for a time, but not abrogated forever.
- 2) The nation’s struggles with this problem are recorded in the Book of Acts.
- 3) The Jew is unadjusted to this age-program to the present time, and it is predicted of him that he will remain blinded in part until the church is called out (Rom. 11:25), after which the Deliverer will come out of Zion and will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Romans 11:25 “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: ISRAEL has experienced a hardening in part until the full number OF THE GENTILES has come in (i.e. “through Christ into the church”).”

4) This, it is stated, is God's covenant with them when He will take away their sins.

Romans 11:26-27 *“And so ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED (i.e. “that are still living at end of the Tribulation period”), as it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; He will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.’”*

c. Nevertheless, through the preaching of the Gospel both Jews and Gentiles are now being saved and the church is being completed.

1) The apostle directed that the Gospel should first be preached to the Jew

Romans 1:16 *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: FIRST FOR THE JEW, then for the Gentile.”*

2) And his own ministry was ordered according to this program.

Acts 17:1-3 *“When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. AS HIS CUSTOM WAS, Paul went into THE SYNAGOGUE, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. ‘This Jesus I am proclaiming to you IS THE MESSIAH,’ he said.”*

d. As has been suggested, two revelations were given to the Apostle Paul:

1) One, of the gospel of the grace of God—probably while in Arabia at the beginning of his ministry

Galatians 1:11-12 *“I want you to know, brothers, THAT THE GOSPEL I PREACHED is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.”*

2) And the other, of the church which is the body of Christ—probably while in prison.

Ephesians 3:2-6 *“Surely you have heard about the administration OF GOD’S GRACE that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, MEMBERS TOGETHER OF ONE BODY, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”*

- a) The vital feature of the second revelation is that out of the two sources—Jews and Gentiles—God is now forming one new body.

Ephesians 2:11-17 *“Therefore, remember that formerly you WHO ARE GENTILES by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those WHO CALL THEMSELVES “THE CIRCUMCISION” (that done in the body by the hands of men)— remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. BUT NOW IN CHRIST JESUS you who once were far away HAVE BEEN BROUGHT NEAR through the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, WHO HAS MADE THE TWO ONE and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself ONE NEW MAN OUT OF THE TWO, thus making peace, and in this ONE BODY to reconcile BOTH OF THEM TO GOD THROUGH THE CROSS, by which He put to death their hostility.”*

- b) This was a mystery, or hitherto unrevealed divine secret.

2. That God had purposes for Israel, or for the Gentiles, was no secret since it is the theme of Old Testament prophecy; but the secret “hid in God” was the making of a new heavenly order of beings from both Jews and Gentiles.

E. Church Membership

1. The answer to the question, “Could a person be saved and not be a church member?” depends upon the meaning which is given the word “church.”
 - a. It is obviously true that a person may be a Christian and not be a member of a local organized church.
 - b. In fact, all should be saved before they join a church; and, if saved, it is normal for the individual to choose the fellowship of the people of God in one form or another.
 - c. On the other hand, it is impossible to be saved and not be a member of the church which is Christ’s own body; for a part of the divine work in salvation is the uniting of the saved one to Christ by baptism with the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:13 *“For we were ALL BAPTIZED by one Spirit INTO ONE BODY—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”*

1 Corinthians 12:27-28a *“Now you are THE BODY OF CHRIST, and each one of you is a part of it. And IN THE CHURCH God has appointed...”*

- 1) As used in connection with the work of the Spirit, “baptize” is a word of discriminating meaning which reaches far beyond the limits of the outward ordinance of water baptism and represents that ministry of the Spirit for the believer which is more far-reaching in its effects than any other divine undertaking in salvation.

2) It is not surprising that Satan has undertaken to distort the plain meaning of the baptism with the Spirit and the divine ministry it represents; for only on the ground of this ministry can we understand the riches of divine grace or enter into the celestial joy, with its impulse to a holy life, which these riches impart.

2. On the earth, “the church” is seen to be a pilgrim band of “witnesses”.

a. They are not of this world even as Christ is not of this world

John 17:16 “THEY ARE NOT OF THE WORLD, even as I am not of it.”

b. And as the Father has sent the Son into the world, so has the Son sent these “the church” into the world to be His “witnesses”.

Acts 1:8 “*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.*”

3. In heaven, as to what they really are through riches of grace, “it doth not yet appear” (see Col 3:4; 1 John 3:2).

4. Being the heavenly people in contrast with Israel the earthly people, the church—glorified in the realization of her divine purpose—is seen in heaven where she appears as the bride of the Lamb, co-reigning with the King, and partaker forever in the glory of the eternal Son of God.

Revelation 19:7-8 “*Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and HIS BRIDE (i.e. “the church of all believers”) has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)”*

Revelation 20:4 “*I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded BECAUSE OF THEIR TESTIMONY FOR JESUS and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and REIGNED WITH CHRIST a thousand years.”*

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Doctrine # 35 - “The Church: Her Members”

1. Read Pages 1-9 from the Doctrine#35 Study Guide by next Wednesday.
2. Answer the following Questions about “The Church” as you read:

a. The Church As The Present Purpose of God

- 1) The “church” in the New Testament is revealed to be “what” in the present age? (page 1, top)

- 2) What is a good “biblical” definition of the New Testament church? (page 1, top)

- 3) The “concept” of the church falls into “what” two major categories? (page 1, middle-top)

- 4) The word “church” is a translation of “what” Greek word? What does this Greek word “mean”?
(page 1, middle-bottom)

- 5) Although the word “church” can have several different interpretations, when it is used in relationship to the “body of Christ”, what does this word refer to? (page 2, top)

- 6) True or False. The concept of “church” is almost exclusively a New Testament concept.
(page 2, top-middle)

b. The Church: A New Testament Revelation

- 1) What needed to happen “first” before “the church” was introduced as a divine plan of God?
(page 2, middle)

- 2) What specifically named “holy day” was used by God to fulfill His purpose of having a special company of believers disregarding the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles? (page 2, middle-bottom)

- 3) What did the Spirit do to all believers whether Jew or Greeks, slave or free? (1Corinthians 12:13)

- 4) True or False. Now that the Lord has established His church on earth, consisting of uniting believers of both Jews and Gentiles, there will never again be a distinguishing of Jews and Gentiles in the Millennial Reign of Christ or in heaven. (page 2, bottom)

c. The Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God

- 1) In the present age, what three major divisions of the human family does the Bible recognize?
(page 3, top; see also 1Corinthians 10:32)

- 2) How would you describe who the “Jews” are from an O.T. biblical standpoint? (page 3, top)

- 3) According to Isaiah 61:1-12, during the Millennial Reign of Christ, what are “the Jews”, the people of Israel, going to be called on earth?

- 4) What are “five” things that are included in the promises made to “the Jews” (i.e. “tribes of Israel”)?
(page 3, bottom – page 4, top-middle; Jer 31:36, 33:20-21; Gen 13:14-15; 2Sam 7:13, 16)

- 5) True or False. The promises made to the Jews (i.e. “tribes of Israel”) were covenants that only extended until Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Now all of the promises to the Jews are directed towards “the church” of believers and no longer applies to just the blood descendants of Abraham. (page 4, middle)

- 6) What are “four” words that describe God’s out-working of His divine purpose for the Jews?
(page 4, middle-bottom)

- 7) What is a good description of “Gentiles” and how many “promises” did God make to them as a people group during the period of Adam to Christ? (page 5, top)

- 8) What does the biblical term “church of God” refer to? (page 5, middle-top)

- 9) According to John 3:5, what is one thing that “all” members of the church of God must personally experience before entering the kingdom of God?

- 10) According to Colossians 3:11, how would you describe the membership of the church of God?

- 11) The promises, possessions, and position of the members of the church of God are “where”?
(page 6, top)

- 12) According to Romans 3:9, what is something that Jews and Gentiles have in common?
- 13) What are some things that the Jew has difficulty “understanding” since the death of Christ? (pg 6, btm)
- 14) Under God’s divine program of this current age, how long will the Jews (as an entire people group) be “blinded” and remain in a state of “ungodliness”, not even recognizing their Messiah?
(page 6, bottom; see Romans 11:25)
- 15) What is God’s covenant with the Jews once He has completed building His “church”?
(page 7, top; see Romans 11:26-27)
- 16) According to Romans 1:16, who was Paul instructed to preach the gospel to “first”?
- 17) True or False. Until Jesus’ second coming and the restoration of the nation of Israel, there is no need to witness to Jews because it is impossible for any of them to be saved.
(page 7, middle; see also Acts 17:1-4)
- 18) What are the two revelations that Jesus Christ gave directly to the Apostle Paul?
(page 7, bottom; Galatians 1:11-12; Ephesians 3:2-6)
- 19) According to Ephesians 2:11-17, what is the purpose of Christ tearing down the “dividing wall of hostility” between Jews and Gentiles?

20) What was the mystery (i.e. “divine secret”) that had not been made know to those living in the Old Testament days that was revealed to Paul? (page 8, top; see Ephesians 3:4-6)

e. Church Membership

- 1) When trying to answer the question, “Could a person be saved and not be a church member”?, depends upon “what”? (page 8, middle)

- 2) True or False. It is possible for a person to be “saved” and not be a member of “the” church, the body of Christ. (page 8, middle-bottom; see 1Corinthians 12:13, 27-28a)

- 3) Why is it “not” surprising that Satan has undertaken (through false preachers and doctrines) a plan to distort the meaning of the “baptism” of “the Spirit” and the divine ministry it represents? (page 9, top; see also 2Corinthians 11:13-15)

- 4) On the “earth”, the church is seen to be “what” in the eyes of God? (page 9, top; John 17:16; Acts 1:8)

- 5) What does “the church” appear as “in heaven” as “heavenly people”, in contrast with Israel as “earthly people”? (page 9, middle; see also Revelation 19:7-8 and Revelation 20:4)