



THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

7.1–7.3

7.1 What Is the Church?

The word *ecclesiology* is derived from the Greek words for “church” (*ekkle-sia*) and “doctrine” (*logos*). The Greek word for church is first found in Matthew 16:18 when Christ promised to give His power to the church. The doctrine of the church covers the Bible’s use of the word *church*, its characteristics, leadership, and ordinances.

A. Definitions of the words for church

1. *Ekklesia* (ek/’lā·sē/’a)

This is the most common New Testament Greek word for church. It means “called out” or “separated”; a church is a group of people called out from the world and separated unto Jesus Christ. A church is not a building, but a people. The church is not technically the “house of God.”

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?” 1 Kings 8:27

The Bible speaks of the Christian’s body, not the church building, as being the “temple of the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor. 6:19).

2. *Kuriakon* (kür/’i·ä/’kōn)

This New Testament Greek word for church (used in 1 Cor. 11:20 and Rev. 1:10) means “belonging to the Lord.” A church belongs to the Lord and is composed of people who have been born again into God’s family. German scholars translated this Greek word *kirche*, from which we get our English word *church*.

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B. Differences in the Bible’s use of the word *church*

1. The universal church

In one sense the Bible speaks of one large church made up of all who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and have their names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (1 Cor. 12:13).

- a. Christ's promise was of a singular church.

"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. 16:18

- b. Paul was grieved because of his persecution of the church in general.

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." 1 Cor. 15:9

"For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it." Gal. 1:13

- c. The church is called the body of Christ.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." Eph. 5:23

- d. Christ is the cornerstone of the church.

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Eph. 2:20

- e. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.

"Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. . . . For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. . . . This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Eph. 5:25–32

2. The local church

In the vast majority of cases, the Biblical use of the word *church* refers to a local congregation of believers. They meet in a given locality for the purposes outlined in Acts 2:42–47.

- a. There was a local church in Jerusalem. (Acts 2:42–47; 8:1)

This early church experienced phenomenal growth. Three thousand were saved on the day of Pentecost and five thousand shortly thereafter. Since no building could house all of these new converts, they met in hundreds of different homes. The apostles would travel from house to house preaching, teaching, and administering the Lord's Supper. They initially had services daily to allow

everyone the opportunity to attend a church service. Each apostle may have been responsible for several services each day.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8

But the disciples failed to obey the great commission of Acts 1:8. They were satisfied with their Jerusalem but had neglected Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth. Acts 1:8 indicates that our obligation is to **both** our home country **and** the foreign field. A true missionary outlook must be worldwide. Although those apostles had "filled Jerusalem with [their] doctrine" (Acts 5:28), they did not yet have a worldwide vision of souls going to hell.

God's command was to go into all the world. Nowhere does God demand the saturation of our "Jerusalem" before we can evangelize our "Judaea." It seems that God's method was to bring persecution upon the early church to force them to be more mission-minded. It is interesting to note how Acts 8:1, 4 show the fulfillment of Acts 1:8 by mentioning the very same regions that Christ did in Acts 1:8.

"They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria." Acts 8:1

"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." Acts 8:4

Acts 1:8 gives us a simple outline of the book of Acts.

Jerusalem —Acts 1–4	Samaria —Acts 8
Judaea —Acts 5–7 (5:16)	Earth —Acts 9–28

b. There was a local church in Antioch. (Acts 11:19–26)

It was at this local church that believers were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:26). This church was not as large as the church in Jerusalem, but they were more mission-minded. The missionary spirit of Antioch's church is seen in her membership and leadership, a cross-section of nationalities and cultures. Paul was from Cilicia, Barnabas from Cyprus, and two of her leaders were probably black—"Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene" (Acts 11:20; 13:1).

It was the church at Antioch that confirmed the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas by the Holy Spirit. It was this church that

faithfully supported these missionaries and to which the missionaries always returned after their journeys. It is often seen to be the same today. It is not always the largest church that is the most interested in the support of missions. Many missionaries are on the field today because of the faithfulness of God's smaller churches all across this country.

c. There were local churches established by Paul.

- (1) Ephesus—Acts 20:17
- (2) Corinth—1 Cor. 1:1–2; 2 Cor. 1:1
- (3) Thessalonica—1 Thess. 1:1

d. There were local churches in Asia Minor. (Rev. 2–3)

- (1) Ephesus (5) Sardis
- (2) Smyrna (6) Philadelphia
- (3) Pergamos (7) Laodicea
- (4) Thyatira

C. Design of the church of God

1. It is to **glorify God**.

"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Eph. 3:21

2. It is to **edify its membership**.

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying [building up] of the body of Christ." Eph. 4:11–12

3. It is to **purify its membership**.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5:25–27

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together . . . Purge out therefore the old leaven." 1 Cor. 5:4, 7

4. It is to **evangelize the world.**

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

Matt. 28:19–20

5. It is to **retard corruption in the world.**

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” Matt. 5:13

D. Descriptions of the church in the Bible

1. It is described as **the body of Christ.** (Read 1 Cor. 12:12–31.)

a. The body of Christ consists of diversity.

In verses 12–19 of 1 Corinthians 12 Paul pictures the church as the body of Christ. As the body has many members, so the church has many members. Each member has a different job to do, but each is just as important. Science is just beginning to understand that parts of the body that were once thought to be unnecessary are vitally important. At one time, there were about 180 parts of the body which evolutionists classified as *vestigial* [vēs·tīj’ī·əl], or serving no useful purpose today. Now scientists realize that there are no vestigial organs, only organs that we do not yet fully understand. Twenty years ago tonsillectomies were commonly done, but today they are not performed as readily. Science has discovered that the liver alone has over 500 important functions in the human body. Our nose is thought to be what causes us to shift position throughout the night as we sleep. Without it we would wake up sore from sleeping in the same position all night.

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So it is in the church. Some may feel their position is not important, but that simply is not so. Not everyone can be the preacher. If that were true, no one would be available to listen to the message. Each responsibility is important, and God will reward the faithfulness of all His servants. There are no “vestigial organs” in the body of Christ.

“Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” 1 Cor. 12:22

b. The body of Christ consists of unity.

But this passage also teaches that there is unity in diversity. Verses 20–31 indicate the problem that arises when one member wishes to be another member. The body cannot function properly in the face of jealousy. We should not view our position as man views it but see it from God’s point of view. To truly fulfill this passage, the members of a church must realize the need for mutual dependence and mutual respect. The members of a church should faithfully meet the needs of its membership.

2. It is described as **the building of Christ**.

Although a church is not a building but a people saved and set apart, the Bible does use a building as a symbol of the church. Just as a building has many different parts, so the church of Jesus Christ has several key elements.

Remember that in Biblical symbolism different pictures can be used to illustrate a truth. This is especially true of symbols of Christ. No one symbol could possibly picture the Savior in all His glorious aspects. In one passage He is pictured as the Lamb, in another passage as the Shepherd. In regards to the church He is pictured in different contexts as the **Cornerstone** of the building (the church), the **Foundation** of the building (the church), and the **Builder** of the church.

a. The Cornerstone

The cornerstone (in Bible times) was a key foundational stone, often not seen after the building’s completion, which solidified the entire foundation.

“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” Psa. 118:22

“Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.” 1 Pet. 2:6–7

The cornerstone of the church is Jesus Christ, “despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53:3). But if the church will “fall on this stone” in submission she will “be broken” (Matt. 21:44), a vessel fit for the Master’s use.

b. The Builder

"I [Jesus Christ] will build my church." Matt. 16:18

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets"
Eph. 2:20

In this particular symbolic picture, Christ is the Builder and the apostles and preachers are the foundation. Christ is the power in the church. Without the Builder the building will accomplish nothing of eternal value.

c. The Foundation

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3:11

In this passage Christ is pictured as the foundation of the church. Without the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the church has no Biblical foundation. A group that does not base its beliefs on the sound foundation of Christ and His Word has no right to call itself a church.

3. It is described as **the bride of Christ.** (Eph. 5:25–31; John 14:1–3; Rev. 19:7)

One of the most beautiful pictures of the church is that of Christ's bride. The story behind the Song of Solomon illustrates this symbol admirably.

It seems that in the Song of Solomon a young girl falls in love with a simple shepherd. The more they are together the more they realize that their love is growing. The young lady feels unworthy of this person's love, because she has spent so much time working in the vineyard next to the palace of the king that her skin has become quite darkened. The shepherd must go away for a time, but he promises this young lady that he will soon return and take her for his wife. She counts the days before he is to return, not knowing for sure exactly when that will be.

One day as she is working in the vineyard she sees the entourage of the king approaching with the king close behind. Again she is embarrassed, because she has never actually seen the king. She is shocked as the king approaches her and even more shocked as she realizes that this is the same person who had come dressed as a shepherd several weeks earlier. Her shepherd is the king now, and he is coming to claim her for his own. She becomes his bride and goes to live in his palace for the rest of her life.

This is exactly the idea that the Bible presents concerning Jesus Christ. He came the first time as the simple shepherd, but when He returns again He will be coming as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to take His bride to His heavenly palace.

The parallels are amazing. In Bible times a young man and woman would become espoused for a period of one year (cf. Mary and Joseph). During that time the bridegroom-to-be would build an additional room onto the house of his father so they could come to live there after their marriage. Interestingly, that additional room was called a “mansion.” Christ said that “*in my Father’s house are many mansions*” (John 14:2). Heaven will be made up of beautiful living quarters that are next to our bridegroom Jesus Christ.

When the day finally arrived, the bridegroom would make his journey from his house to the house of his bride. His arrival would often be accompanied by a shout and a trumpet sound (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 Cor. 15:51–58). He would then escort his bride to their new abode.

E. The relationship of the church to civil government

The early church was a persecuted church, and yet it thrived. Sometimes the persecution arose from the religious leaders of the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 5:29); at other times it arose as oppression from a hostile government (Acts 12:1–2). History records ten periods of Roman persecution, beginning with Nero and ending with Diocletian. Although few would suggest that the church in America today suffers as the early church did, it is important that we understand the church’s relationship to government.

1. God instituted government for the welfare of man.

After the fall of man it became evident that mankind could not live in harmony if conscience was the only guide. For sixteen centuries, acts of violence grew to such proportions that God had to send a worldwide Flood in order to purge this world of the results of man’s passions.

After the Flood, God established civil government by instituting the death penalty (capital punishment) for murder.

“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” Gen. 9:6

God again taught the sanctity of human life and reminded us of the reason for its value: man was made in the image of God. Human life is so precious to God that a murderer must forfeit his life at the hands

of God's delegated authority. God ordained that men should establish laws to restrain the evil which had accelerated since man's fall.

"A Christian view of civil government must always steadily and consistently hold to the fact that human society is a society of fallen beings, under the just judgment of God. The perfection of society cannot be either promised or attained, and it is not the purpose of civil government to do so. The Christian religion, on the basis of Scripture, is committed to the doctrine that under the condition of sin man is non-perfectible, either individually or collectively. Any other view is utopian. Certain improvements of relationship are possible. They are indeed, prescribed by Scripture. But the possibilities are not unlimited. This fact, introduced early in Holy Scripture, is of paramount importance to any interpretation of civil government in the Bible." —Robert D. Culver, *Toward a Biblical View of Civil Government*

2. God instituted government as a representative of His authority.

The church should respond to governmental authority the way she responds to God's authority. The Bible teaches a twofold response to government:

a. We are to pray for those in authority over us.

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." 1 Tim. 2:1-2

b. We are to respect governmental authority as we respect God's authority.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers [governing authorities]. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation [condemnation or judgment]. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister [servant] of God, a revenger to execute wrath [punishment] upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Ren-

der therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.” Rom. 13:1–7

But what if the church does not agree with the human authority that is in power? The Bible teaches that it makes no difference. A child is to obey his parents even when he doesn’t agree with them.

The Bible never stipulates that Christians obey only good or just rulers or laws. All governmental rulers are ordained of God and are, therefore, worthy of proper honor.

“He [God] removeth kings, and setteth up kings.” Dan. 2:21

“The most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and . . . appointeth over it whomsoever he will.” Dan. 5:21

3. God requires the proper response to hostile government.

A government is hostile to the church when it ordains a civil law which clearly opposes a command of God. The Bible illustrates the tension between God’s law and man’s law in the lives of Moses (Exo. 1–13), Daniel (Dan. 6), the three friends of Daniel (Dan. 3), and the apostle Paul (Acts 24–26). The rulers under whom they lived were certainly not godly men. We need to remember that when Paul wrote Romans 13:1–7 Nero was ruling the Roman empire. What should the church do when government demands the breaking of God’s law?

The Bible indicates that although some Bible characters disobeyed certain commands of government, they did it in obedience to God. The only time obedience to government must be denied is when it would mean clear, direct disobedience to God.

But Christians today must recognize the spirit in which these men disobeyed the governmental authority. Daniel’s attitude was one of humility and submission as he descended into the den of lions. Daniel’s friends walked willingly into the fiery furnace. Paul patiently waited for the executioner who would usher him into the presence of his Savior. We must be willing to stand for God and still respect the governmental authorities even in their persecution of the church of Jesus Christ. If we cannot obey both God and the government, we must obey God, but we must be respectful and willing to take the persecution.

“But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; . . . For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”

1 Pet. 3:14, 17

7.2 The Officers of the Church

The only two offices of the local church mentioned in the Bible are those of the **pastor** and the **deacon**. Other positions may be assigned to help the church in its ministry to the world, such as *trustees*, who are legal representatives of the incorporated church rather than Scriptural representatives. Trustees represent the church on financial and legal documents.

A. Pastor

1. Biblical terms to describe the pastor

a. Pastor

The word means “**shepherd**.” The pastor is to lead his people as a shepherd would his sheep. He is never to drive them or run before them.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

Acts 20:28

b. Bishop

This word emphasizes the idea of his being an **overseer** of the house of God.

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof.” 1 Pet. 5:2

c. Elder

The word *elder* gives the idea of a man’s mature leadership ability.

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” 1 Tim. 5:17

7.2

2. Biblical qualifications of the pastor (Read 1 Tim. 3:1–7.)

a. Desire

“If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”

1 Tim. 3:1

Not every pastor initially had that desire, but as that man submitted himself to God’s call, the desire eventually came.

“The first sign of the heavenly calling is an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work. In order to be a true call to the ministry there

must be an irresistible, overwhelming craving and raging thirst for telling to others what God has done to our own souls." He went on to say that "the desire must be a thoughtful one. It should not be a sudden impulse unattended by anxious consideration. It should be the outgrowth of our heart in its best moments, the object of our reverent aspirations, the subject of our most fervent prayers. It must continue with us when tempting offers of wealth and comfort come into conflict with it, and remain as a calm, clear-headed resolve after everything has been estimated at its right figure, and the cost thoroughly counted."

—C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, pp. 26–27

b. Blamelessness

"A bishop then must be blameless." 1 Tim. 3:2

This word is the key to everything else that follows. The Lord realizes that whenever a man begins giving instructions to others he will be consistently critiqued by those under his leadership. Human nature demands a pastor who "practices what he preaches." The word "blameless" does not mean "sinless." No one is perfect. The idea is that he is above reproach or not "open to attack." There should be nothing in his testimony before the church or the world which is open to question. The remainder of 1 Tim. 3:1–7 shows in what areas a pastor must be "blameless."

c. Husband of one wife

"A bishop then must be . . . the husband of one wife." 1 Tim. 3:2

The phrase actually means "a one-woman-type man." The idea is that, whether married or not, he has the attitude of faithfulness to one woman. This passage does not require him to be married any more than verse four requires a childless couple to have children. But it does seem to indicate that a divorced man should not be the pastor of a church. From a practical standpoint, this makes sense. How can he be "blameless" as he counsels others with marriage problems, if he himself has not been successful in that area of his life?

d. Sober

"A bishop then must be . . . sober." 1 Tim. 3:2

The pastor must have common sense and be serious-minded about eternal matters.

e. Given to hospitality

"A bishop then must be . . . given to hospitality." 1 Tim. 3:2

The pastor should be able to make friends easily and show his brotherly love by an openhearted and generous nature. He should always be in control of the situation lest he give offense.

f. Apt to teach

"A bishop then must be . . . apt to teach." 1 Tim. 3:2

A pastor must have an ability in this area. His main responsibility is to feed the flock of God with spiritual food. He is responsible to "edify" the saints (Eph. 4:12). The words "pastors and teachers" are so linked in the Greek of Ephesians 4:11 as to indicate that they are one and the same responsibility.

"There must be an aptness to teach and some measure of the other qualities needful for the office of a public instructor. A man to prove his call must make a successful trial of these. I do not claim that the first time a man rises to speak he must preach as well as Robert Hall [English pulpit orator of the early eighteenth century] did in his later days. If he preaches no worse than that great man did at the first, he must not be condemned. You are aware that Robert Hall broke down altogether three times, and cried, 'If this does not humble me, nothing will.' Some of the noblest speakers were not in their early days the most fluent. Even Cicero at first suffered from a weak voice and a difficulty of utterance."

—C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, p. 28

g. Not given to wine

"A bishop then must be . . . not given to wine." 1 Tim. 3:2-3

In the Greek these words have the idea of "not attending wild, drunken parties." He should never be one who associates with the wrong crowd nor gives himself to worldliness.

7.2

h. No striker

"A bishop then must be . . . no striker." 1 Tim. 3:2-3

The pastor should never take vengeance into his own hands. His public and private manners should be mild.

i. Not greedy of filthy lucre

"A bishop then must be . . . not greedy of filthy lucre." 1 Tim. 3:2-3

A good pastor should never make money an issue of his ministry nor be a lover of money.

j. One that ruleth well his own house

"A bishop then must be . . . one that ruleth well his own house."
1 Tim. 3:2–4

The raising of a pastor's children is a constant challenge. The idea in 1 Timothy 3 does not seem to be that if his children temporarily step out of line, he must resign from the ministry. Childrearing is a lifetime proposition. If his children are continuously rebellious, it will be difficult to remain "blameless" in counseling his members on the Biblical methodology of raising children.

"For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" 1 Tim. 3:5

It must also be remembered that in the first century a twelve-year-old child was considered completely responsible for his own actions.

k. Not a novice

"The bishop then must be . . . not a novice." 1 Tim. 3:2–6

The pastor should not be a new Christian lest he be "lifted up with pride." Occasionally a new Christian is placed in a position of leadership by well-meaning church members, but the Bible indicates this is not wise church polity.

l. Of good report

"A bishop then must be . . . of good report." 1 Tim. 3:2–7

In Bible times only men in the local church who were of good report were considered as candidates for the pastorate (Acts 6:3; 14:23). Once the church approved of them, they were ordained to the ministry in a service which included the laying on of the hands of the church leadership as a sign of dedication (Acts 13:3; 1 Tim. 4:14; Titus 1:5). Today most pastors are ordained to the ministry by appearing before an ordination council. This council consists of ordained ministers who ask the pastoral candidate questions to see if he has a good understanding of Bible doctrine. If the candidate is approved by the council, he is then ordained publicly by the local church.

3. Biblical duties of the pastor

- a. To be an example (1 Pet. 5:2, 3)
- b. To rule (1 Tim. 5:17)
- c. To guard right doctrine (Titus 1:9)
- d. To “perfect” (help mature) the saints (Eph. 4:12)
- e. To “edify” (build up) the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12)
- f. To “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2)

B. Deacon

1. Biblical term

The word deacon means “servant.” The deacon is not to rule as the pastor rules. The office of deacon was instituted so the pastor would have more time to pray and minister the Word.

“It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” Acts 6:2–3

These deacons were to “serve” by eliminating from the pastor’s duties tedious responsibilities that very quickly increased as the size of the congregation grew.

2. Qualifications (Read 1 Tim. 3:8–13.)

Because of his leadership position, many of the qualifications of the deacon are similar to those of the pastor. He must be first and foremost “blameless” (1 Tim. 3:10).

The wife of the deacon is given several responsibilities in verse 11. Although some churches have deaconesses (to help with church functions), they are not considered a separate office. 1 Timothy 3:11 refers, not to a deaconess, but to a deacon’s wife.

7.2

3. Duties

The primary duty of the deacon was to serve. His responsibility was primarily secular in nature, although spiritual in God’s sight. He was to take care of the menial tasks so as to allow the pastor time to study the Word of God and to pray. Today the primary function of the deacon is often an advisory capacity.

7.3 The Ordinances of the Church

An **ordinance** is an outward duty prescribed by Christ to be performed by His Church. The churches of the New Testament practiced only two ordinances: *baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*.

A. Baptism

1. Definition of baptism

The word *baptize* (*baptizo* in Greek) means “to dip under,” or “to immerse.” Baptism is a symbol of the believer’s identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Rom. 6:3–4

“Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” Col. 2:12

In baptism, the believer is testifying that he was “in Christ” when He died on the cross, that he was buried with Him, and that he has arisen to newness of life because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

2. Prerequisites of baptism

a. Instruction

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Matt. 28:19

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Acts 8:35–37

Before a person can be baptized, he must understand enough to be saved. If he has a good background in the Bible, that instruction may be minimal. But like the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:35–37, some people will need much detailed instruction before they will

understand God's way of salvation. Missionaries have reported that in some cultures the instruction of a national may take years before he is ready to become a Christian.

b. Faith

Once a person has been instructed in the way of salvation and has accepted Christ as his Savior, he is ready to follow the Lord in believer's baptism. The Bible order is always salvation first, then baptism.

"Then they that gladly received his word [by faith] were baptized."

Acts 2:41

"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest [be baptized]."

Acts 8:37

A person does not need to have a **full** understanding of the Scripture before he is saved and baptized. That understanding comes with time. Like the Ethiopian eunuch, an individual must believe that Jesus Christ is God and died for his sins. Simple faith in Christ is the primary prerequisite for baptism.

In many foreign countries, following the Lord in baptism is a real test of a convert's faith. By baptism he is publicly identifying himself with a group whose beliefs are contrary to the religion of his country and family. Many a new Christian has been "declared to be dead" when he follows the Lord in believer's baptism.

3. Practical principles of baptism

Does a person *have* to be baptized in a local church?

Can *any* Christian baptize another Christian?

The answers to these questions are not obvious in Scripture. It should be noted, however, that baptism is an ordinance given to the **church** and therefore needs to be tied in to the membership of that local church (Acts 2:41). Appropriateness would seem to dictate that if anyone could baptize anywhere, the ordinance would soon lose the special honor that comes when God's ordained minister performs his God-given duty.

7.3

B. The Lord's Supper

1. Explanation of the Lord's Supper

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is mentioned in each of the first three gospels (Matt. 26:26–30; Mark 14:22–26; Luke 22:17–20). It was insti-

tuted by Jesus on the night He was betrayed. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul discusses in detail the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. 11:23–26

The Lord's Supper has its roots in the **Passover feast** of the Old Testament. It was the Passover meal that Christ shared with His disciples the night He was betrayed. The Passover looked ahead to what Christ would do; the Lord's Supper looks back to what Christ did do. We are to observe the Lord's Supper "in remembrance" of what Christ did for us on the cross of Calvary.

One of the reasons the Lord's Supper (and baptism as well) is considered to be an ordinance is that it was practiced in the early church (as well as being explicitly commanded by Christ.)

"And upon the first day of the week, . . . the disciples came together to break bread." Acts 20:7

"Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. . . . For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. 11:2, 26

2. Participants in the Lord's Supper

a. Open communion

This view teaches that all who have accepted Christ as Savior may participate since it is the Lord's Supper.

b. Closed communion

This view teaches that since the disciples were a "localized" group of believers at the Last Supper only the membership of a particular church or a church "of like faith" may participate.

3. Frequency of the Lord's Supper

a. It was observed daily in Jerusalem after Pentecost because they had to have many house-services to take care of the crowds.

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Acts 2:46

- b.** It was observed weekly later in the book of Acts.

"And upon the first day of the week, . . . the disciples came together to break bread." Acts 20:7

- c.** Its observance is more important than its frequency.

"as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup" 1 Cor. 11:26

In a recent poll it was discovered that the average Bible-believing church observes the Lord's Supper quarterly.

4. Elements of the Lord's Supper

Christ was not partaking of his own flesh when He said, "This is my body," but rather the elements (bread and juice) are a symbolic representation of His broken body and shed blood.

- a.** Unleavened bread

During the Passover, all leaven was required to be removed from the Jewish house.

"Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel." Exo. 12:15

This was done because leaven was often a symbol of sin in the Bible.

"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." 1 Cor. 5:7-8

7.3

To be an accurate picture of Christ's sinlessness, the bread must be without leaven.

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Pet. 1:18-19

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." 1 Pet. 2:21-22

b. The cup or fruit of the vine

The gospel writers describe the drink at the Last Supper as the “fruit of the vine” (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18).

5. Practical principles concerning the Lord’s Supper

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” 1 Cor. 11:27–28

Some have taken the phrase “unworthily” to an unfortunate extreme. In reality no Christian is worthy to partake of the Lord’s Supper. The expression has reference to the problems of sin in the Corinthian church. The Christian is to examine himself of any sins that are unconfessed, and he is to confess and forsake them. Then he is **commanded** to partake of the Lord’s Supper in remembrance of all that Christ has done for him.

7.1

1. What word means “doctrine of the church”?
ecclesiology
2. In what local church were the believers first called Christians?
the church at Antioch
3. List some of the purposes of the church.
See Section 7.1, pp. 202–203.

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4. List the three pictures used in the Bible to describe the church.
body of Christ, building of Christ, bride of Christ

7.2

1. What does the word *pastor* mean?
shepherd
2. Which of the pastor’s qualifications is the key to all the succeeding qualifications?
blameless (ness)
3. How many offices are there in the church? Name them.
two; pastor and deacon

7.3

1. Name the two ordinances of the local church.
baptism and the Lord’s Supper
2. What does the word *baptize* mean?
to dip under or to immerse
3. What is the primary prerequisite for baptism?
faith in Christ