

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: (ORGANIZED BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

Part VII: Ecclesiology (The Doctrine Of The Church)

B. The Organization Of The Church

I. Introduction

- A. Many denominations and splinters of denominations exist in Christendom with a host of variations in doctrine and function. This hinders the discipling process according to Ephesians 4:13-14 (implied).
- B. Scripture supplies insight into the organization of the Church to overcome this matter as follows:

II. The Organization Of The Church (I am indebted to Chafer's Syst. Theology, v. IV, Ecclesiology.)

- A. The Church is **spiritually** organized by God as follows:
 - 1. Every believer's spiritual life is wrapped up in the position he has in the life of Christ, 1 Jn. 5:11-12; Eph. 1:20-23. As such, Christ is the **Head** of all members in the Spiritual Church.
 - 2. Jesus Christ is the **sole MEDIATOR** between believers and God in the Church, 1 Timothy 2:5.
 - 3. The single practical ultimate authority for all faith and practice in the body of the Spiritual Church is **Scripture**, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. So closely intertwined is Christ with Scripture that both are equated in John 1:1-14 and Revelation 19:11-16.
 - 4. As the **Head** of the Church, Christ has exemplified how the Church is to interpret the Scriptures so there is to be no error! The Church is to interpret the Bible in its normal, literal, grammatical, historical contexts as Jesus did of Exodus 3:6 in Mark 12:18-27!
- B. The Church is **physically** organized by God as follows:
 - 1. The Physical Church is considered to be a **Local Body** in one sense:
 - a. God recognizes local groups of believers as local churches, Philemon v. 2; 3 John v. 9.
 - b. Local churches physically consist of groups of believers gifted and arranged geographically and spiritually by God (1 Cor. 12:4-25) who are organized under duly Biblically qualified, constituted leaders (Tit. 1:5), and who meet for the public reading, teaching and preaching of the written Word of God (1 Timothy 3:15; 4:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-4:2) and for fellowship and worship (Acts 2:41-42).
 - 2. The Physical Church is considered to be the **Universal Body** of Christ in another sense:
 - a. Every person who has been justified and indwelt by the Holy Spirit between the Day of Pentecost and the Rapture (adding O. T. believers who trust in Christ in the book of Acts, cf. Acts 19:1-7) belongs to the universal body of Christ, cf. Eph. 1:22-23; Heb. 12:22-23; Rev. 19:7-8.
 - b. The two ordinances given to the Universal Body of Christ to be performed at the local level are: (a) the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 11:23-29) and (b) Believer's water Baptism (Mtt. 28:19-20).

Lesson and Application: This information provides many applications today: (1) As Jesus is the sole Mediator between God and man, there is no separate priesthood within the local or universal Church as a mediatorship for lay believers! Each believer is a king-priest, Rev. 1:6; 1 Peter 2:9. (2) There is thus no Apostolic succession based on the rule of Peter or the other apostles! Peter was FALLIBLE, in need of correction by Paul, Gal. 2:11-14! Their apostolic authority to "bind" or "loose" (Mtt. 16:19; Jn. 20:22-23) in the Greek manuscripts merely reflected what Christ previously authorized! (3) The Local Church should not be overextended in EITHER teaching OR fellowship OR worship, but BALANCE these functions, cf. Acts 2:41-42. (4) Also, it is to have duly constituted, organized leaders to qualify as a Local Church, cf. Tit. 1:5. Thus, pockets of splintered groups in Christian circles need correcting by the institution of such order (cf. 1 Tim. 3:14-15). (5) Not all groups in Christendom belong to the Universal Body of Christ: some deny Christ, etc., exposing this fact, 1 John 4:1-4; 1 John 2:18ff; John 17:14, 16, 20-21. (6) Although it is practiced by some godly groups, we do not hold Foot Washing to be an ordinance. It was an illustration in John 13:1-15. (7) The "Sacraments" deemed necessary for salvation by some, constitute a false Gospel, cf. Gal. 1:8-9; Eph. 2:8-9. (6) Variations in belief among believers come from departing from Scripture's authority or Jesus' method of interpreting it, or both. To correct this, pastors must faithfully minister the Word in God's power, Eph. 4:11-13a; 2 Tim. 4:1-5!