



St. Joseph's
Episcopal Church

The Rev. Canon Dr. Winfred B. Vergara

TEN BIBLE DOCTRINES

Session 9 | Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church





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Prayer Before Bible Study

Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which You have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

—Collect for Proper 28: Book of Common Prayer, page 236)

Review | Bibliology

We studied four subdivisions of Bibliology, the Doctrine of the Bible:

A. Revelation

The Bible is the revealed Word of God

B. Inspiration

The Bible is inspired by God

C. Illumination

The Holy Spirit enlightens us to study God's Word

D. Interpretation

We are students of the Bible who seek to interpret God's Word.

Review | Theology

We studied four subdivisions of Theology, the Doctrine of God:

A. God's Existence

The Bible contains evidence that God exists

B. God's Attributes

God is Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent

C. God's Sovereignty

God can do whatever God wills

D. God is the Trinity

God is the Father, God is the Son, God is the Holy Spirit

Review | Christology

The four major ideas to remember about Christology are:

1. **Christ is God**

Christ is divine and has God's power

2. **Christ is Human**

Christ experienced humanity while retaining the power of God

3. **Christ is Resurrected**

Jesus is the Messiah. As a servant-leader Messiah He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He is resurrected because He is God.

4. **Christ will Return**

He will return as the Messiah, the King, to establish His kingdom on earth.

Review | Pneumatology

Four major ideas to remember about The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit are:

1. **The Holy Spirit is a personal Being**

The Holy Spirit is a being with its own personality

2. **The Holy Spirit is Divine**

They are a divine being with the omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence of God.

3. **The Holy Spirit is involved in Salvation**

CRIBS | Conviction, Regeneration, Indwelling, Baptism, and Sealing: the five areas in which the Holy Spirit bestows salvation

4. **The Holy Spirit has given us Gifts**

The Holy Spirit has given Christians spiritual gifts so that we may minister to God, fellow Christians, and the world.

Review | Angelology & Demonology

Four major concepts to remember about Angels and Demons are:

1. Angels are spirit beings, who as God's messengers, minister to humanity.
2. Satan is a fallen angel who led a rebellion against God. He is a powerful spirit being who works against God. He has been defeated by Jesus through the resurrection.
3. Demons are the legions of Satan, and who are fallen angels who are evil and corrupt. They, with Satan, are the forces of darkness who fight against God's will.
4. To defend against Satan, we must take up God's armor, be vigilant, and resist sin and temptation.

Review | Theological Anthropology

Humanity is a divine creation:

1. Humanity was created in the image of God.
2. Humans are physical beings with Spirit and souls.
3. Humanity is distinctive. It was gifted aspects of God's spirit and as such is capable of stewardship over the earth and its animals.
4. After the physical body dies, our souls live on in either heaven or hell, depending on the choices we have made, for good or evil, and for salvation and repentance.

Review | Hamartiology: The Doctrine of Sin

Sin is the thought and action that defies the God, His Word, and his purpose for humanity.

1. Humanity was created in God's image and all that is good and right comes from God.
2. Humanity's first sin was in the Garden of Eden; the Fall of Man.
3. The Fall of Man corrupted the hearts and souls of humanity. We are born in sin, and sin because we are sinners.
4. Sin creates a moral death where we cannot do good and we become slaves to sin. We cannot help ourselves.
5. Jesus, the only perfect and sinless human, sacrificed himself, paying the price for our sins and creating a path for salvation.

Review | Soteriology: The Doctrine of Salvation

Salvation is a gift from God: it is eternal life in the fullness of God's love.

1. With Conviction, Regeneration, Indwelling, Baptism, Sealing, the Holy Spirit is a part of God's plan for our salvation.
2. God forgives our sins once we have repented.
3. The penalty for sin is death, however, Jesus, the only perfect and sinless human, sacrificed himself, paying the price for our sins and creating a path for our salvation.
4. Sin causes a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity. This Sin creates a moral death where we cannot do good and we become slaves to sin. Our salvation is achieved at death, when our body dies and our Soul and Spirit are united to join the fullness of God's love.

Introduction

What is Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of Church?

The etymology of the word theology comes from two Greek words:

- **Ekklesia**, meaning **a gathering or assembly**; this was derived from the Greek for **call out** or **summon** which indicates a called assembly.
- **Logos**, which has two meanings:
 1. logos literally means **word or words** in Ancient Greek
 2. logos is also a concept; it is **reason**, that in ancient Greek philosophy is the controlling principle in the universe

Introduction

In Biblical usage it [*ecclesia*] meant the assembly called by God, the church. Because of the Incarnation, in which the Word of God is united to humanity, the entire human family—past, present, and future—is called into union with God in the Body of Christ. More specifically, the *ecclesia* is the body of those who are made members of His Body through baptism...The Greek word *ekklesia* (from *ek*, “out of,” and *kalein*, “to call”) describes the church as those “called out” by God from worldly existence to a new life in Christ.

An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church, Copyright © 2000 by Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, Editors, Church Publishing, Inc.

Ecclesiology is the study of those called by God; the nature, structure, and attributes of the Church. It guides us towards an understanding of how we relate to God and to each other.

Introduction

The first time that people who worshipped Yahweh, the great I Am, were all assembled in one place was in Exodus when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and to the mountain where God spoke to His people and eventually gave Moses the Ten Commandments. This day is called **the Day of the Assembly**.

And the Lord gave me the two stone tablets written with the finger of God; on them were all the words that the Lord had spoken to you at the mountain out of the fire on the day of the assembly.

— Deuteronomy 9:10

Introduction

In an important sense, this is the beginning of the church. It was on this day that the nation of Israel became, by covenant, God's holy nation, distinguished from all the other nations of the world. God has redeemed the Israelites from Egypt; they are his treasured possession among all peoples (Ex. 19:4–5). They are a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (v. 6). Their constitution is the covenant-treaty called the Ten Commandments.

– John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*

The Biblical nation of Israel (different from the political nation created in 1945), as the people of the Covenant is the precursor to the Christian church. The Christian church is the church of the New Covenant. Our Church exists all around the world, and its holiest place is found within the bodies of believers, where the Holy Spirit dwells.

Introduction

The Church of the New Covenant began on the Pentecost in Acts 2 when the apostles were invested by the Holy Spirit and will culminate when Jesus returns. Christ is the head of the church and its members carry out His will.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. – Colossians 1:15-18

Nature of the Church

To adequately describe the Church, we have to return to the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer.

What is the Church?

The Church is the community of the New Covenant.

How is the Church described in the Bible?

The Church is described as the Body of which Jesus Christ is the Head and of which all baptized persons are members. It is called the People of God, the New Israel, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, and the pillar and ground of truth.

How is the Church described in the creeds?

The Church is described as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

Nature of the Church

Why is the Church described as one?

The Church is one, because it is one Body, under one Head, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why is the Church described as holy?

The Church is holy, because the Holy Spirit dwells in it, consecrates its members, and guides them to do God's work.

Why is the Church described as catholic?

The Church is catholic because it proclaims the whole Faith to all people, to the end of time.

Nature of the Church

Why is the Church described as apostolic?

The Church is apostolic, because it continues in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles and is sent to carry out Christ's mission to all people.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

— Matthew 16:18

Nature of the Church

As we learned from the Book of Common Prayer, the Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. It is one body made up of many communities of faith, united in belief of, and service to the Lord.

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

— Ephesians 4:1-6

Nature of the Church

The Church is holy by means of its members, who are called saints and God's holy people. We learned that the Holy Spirit both guides and communes with the Spirit within the bodies of believers. Also called the Body of Christ, the Church is one consisting of all of its believers who are holy by association and in communion with the Lord.

The word *catholic*, comes from the Greek words **katholikos** which means universal; from **katholou** meaning, in general; and **kata** + **holos**, which mean whole.

This means that the Church encompasses the entirety of believers in Christ, from its inception to those who have yet to become Christians. This catholic, or universal church is God's representation on earth, actively doing His will.

Nature of the Church

The Church is both visible and invisible. The invisible church is “the Church as God sees it” while the visible church, is as man sees it. (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology). The visible church consists of people who profess faith, but don't actually live faithfully to God's laws.

This leads naturally to the idea that the church is both visible and invisible. It is invisible in that God knows who is *truly* a Christian and who is not. It is visible in that there are local expressions of it to which Christians commit themselves. Further, it is not necessary to belong to a local church to be a Christian, though, of course, one will want to out of obedience to Christ. And, just because a person goes to church, does not mean they are in fact part of the spiritual body of Christ. –Greg Herrick, An Introduction to Christian Belief

Nature of the Church

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

— Matthew 16:18

The Living Church

The Church is not a building. It is a living organism of people who are followers of Christ.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

The Living Church

If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect, whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

— 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

The Living Church

As a collective of humans dedicated to the will and worship of God, the church is His representation on earth. The church is organized to worship, minister to each other and all people, and observe the sacraments.

Why is the Church described as apostolic?

The Church is apostolic, because it continues in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles and is sent to carry out Christ's mission to all people.

The Great Commission outlines the tasks of the church of the New Covenant as well as the organization itself. The church is to be spread throughout the world in order to carry out God's mission and teaching.

The Living Church

The Church has three missional tasks: to worship, nurture, and witness. The Great Commission outlines the tasks of the church of the New Covenant as well as the organization itself. The church is to be spread throughout the world in order to carry out God's mission and teaching.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

— Matthew 28:18-20

The Living Church

What is the mission of the Church?

The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

How does the Church pursue its mission?

The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love.

Through whom does the Church carry out its mission?

The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members.

The Living Church

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ, Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.

— 1 Corinthians 1:1-2

The Church Leadership

Jesus gave powers to the Church which are concentrated on worship, ministry, and evangelism and are carried out through its leadership of bishops, priests, deacons, and lay leaders.

In the Episcopalian form of church government the Presiding Bishop has authority over the Bishop who in turn presides over a diocese, i.e., several churches, which are cared for by the Rector or Vicar, or the Priest-in-Charge. The Presiding Bishop, Bishops, and Rectors are all ordained priests within the Episcopal system of church government.

The Scripture gives us freedom as to how church leadership is organized and functions, but it is specific about the spiritual qualifications of leadership within the church; only spiritually mature believers are to be given high leadership positions within the church.

The Church Leadership

Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, and apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way. He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil.

— 1 Timothy 3:2-4, 6-7

Church Membership

Membership in the Church, the Body of Christ is determined by belief in it. True Christians are believers in and followers of Jesus Christ.

Who are the ministers of the Church?

The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.

What is the ministry of the laity?

The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in life, worship, and governance of the Church.

Church Membership

What is the ministry of a bishop?

The ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as an apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry.

What is the ministry of a priest or presbyter?

The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

Church Membership

What is the ministry of a deacon?

The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

What is the duty of all Christians?

The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God.

Church Membership

Membership in the Church is important; Jesus never intended for Christians to try to make it alone. Placing oneself under spiritual authority and in mutual ministry with others is essential to spiritual health. In that vein, one of the most important roles of the Church is to provide community for Christians.

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. – Hebrews 10:24-25

Summary | Ecclesiology

The Church is the representation of God on earth.

1. The Church, called the Body of Christ is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic organization.
2. The Church is a living community of people dedicated to the worship of and service to God. It is a global community that exists within each Christian.
3. The Church's carries out its mission through the leadership of clergy and lay leaders who must be disciplined and adhere to God's laws.
4. Membership in the Church is determined by belief in Christ. Every Christian is a member of the Church, the local parish as well as the Body of Christ.