

Series Title – What I Believe
Lesson Number 6

I Believe in the Church

TEXT: *Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

THEME: If Jesus died for the church, and it is the only thing He claimed ownership of, then we need to know what it is and make sure we do right by the church!

INTRODUCTION:

We have been discussing a little statement of faith that goes like this:

(QUOTE IT)

So far we've talked about several key components of what we believe:

We believe in the inspiration of the Bible.
We believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ, God's Son.
We believe in the Holy Spirit of God.

Let us move on now to discuss what we believe about this thing called "the church."
"I believe that God has given to the church, the responsibility to evangelize the world through the preaching of the gospel and personal soul winning."

If Jesus died for the church, and it is the only thing He claimed ownership of, then we need to know what it is and make sure we do right by the church! It is an important doctrine, or truth, in scripture. There are 79 verses in the Bible that talk about the church (they are included at the end of this outline). And yet, even though so much was written about it, much error surrounds the way we have implemented these 79 verses in our local churches today.

Let's begin with some questions:

QUESTION – Let's just look at that phrase for a minute, and let's try and list everything that we can learn about the church from that sentence.

ANSWERS – Here are some things I see, all of which are true: 1. There is an institution called "the church." 2. It was instituted by God. 3. It is "the" church... there is only one. 4. The church has a job to do... a responsibility. 5. That job is evangelism (there's more to the church's job than evangelism, but that is the extent seen in this statement). 6. The means of accomplishing the responsibility of the church includes the methods of preaching and personal soul winning. 7. Implied in those 2 methods are the tools of the church, which are the Word of God and the lifestyles of the church members.

As you can see, we can sum up a lot of our belief system in a little sentence. That's why I love this statement of faith. If you recite it to yourself over and over, it reminds you of what you really believe.

Well, let's talk about some truths concerning the church.

I. What is the Church?

QUESTION – Let's talk about that question... How do you answer the question, "What is the church?"

QUESTION – Is it a building?

QUESTION – Is it a denomination?

QUESTION – How many churches are there?

Spiritually speaking, the church is universal.

QUOTE "It is all those who, in this age, have been born of the Spirit of God (John 3) and have been baptized by that same Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13)." Thiessen

As implemented here on earth, though, the church is local.

QUOTE "In this sense, the term 'church' describes a group of professing believers in any certain locality." (Thiessen?)

Paul wrote to individual churches. These were local bodies of believers in various localities.

The church is NOT Israel.

1 Corinthians 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

Romans 11 is another text that talks a lot about the difference between the church and Israel.

The church is NOT a building. (No building in the Bible is ever referred to as a "church." That is a mistaken modern use of the word. We should never use the word that way. NEVER say, "I'm going down to the church." Rather say, "I'm going down to the church BUILDING.")

The church is NOT a denomination.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4 "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, [even] as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able [to bear it], neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas [there is] among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I [am] of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"

QUESTION – Is God pleased with denominations?

The church is NOT “yours” or “mine”

Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

ILLUS I've heard people refer to “my church.” Usually this is meant innocently enough, but it is not scriptural. It's Christ's church, and His alone.

ILLUS Pastor's are especially bad about this. It is CHRIST'S CHURCH and HIS ALONE.

DEFINITION – Ecclesia – A called out assembly. Here are some of the ways it is used in scripture (from Online Bible Greek Lexicon):

1) a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly

1a) an assembly of the people convened at the public place of the council for the purpose of deliberating

1b) the assembly of the Israelites

1c) any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance, tumultuously

1d) in a Christian sense

1d1) an assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting

1d2) a company of Christians, or of those who, hoping for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, observe their own religious rites, hold their own religious meetings, and manage their own affairs, according to regulations prescribed for the body for order's sake

1d3) those who anywhere, in a city, village, constitute such a company and are united into one body

1d4) the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth

1d5) the assembly of faithful Christians already dead and received into heaven

II. The Church and its Officers

The Head (Christ)

Once we understand that Christ is the SOLE AUTHORITY and the ONLY HEAD of the church, we can examine the 2 church offices described in scripture.

Philippians 1:1 ¶ Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

The Pastor

QUESTION – What is the role of the pastor?

QUESTION – How much authority does the pastor have?

QUESTION – Who is the pastor accountable to?

QUESTION – Can anybody be a pastor?

QUESTION – Who can? Who cannot?

Some scriptures to help us understand this office:

Role – pastor / shepherd / teacher:

Ephesians 4:11-14 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 of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

ILLUS “The tasks of a Near Eastern shepherd were: -to watch for enemies trying to attack the sheep -to defend the sheep from attackers - to heal the wounded and sick sheep -to find and save lost or trapped sheep -to love them, sharing their lives and so earning their trust.”

Responsibility

Preach the word

*“... pastors and **teachers**...” Eph 4:12*

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Live a life of example, always.

1 Timothy 4:12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

2 Corinthians 4:1-2 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Administer the church – be a decision maker

Hebrews 13:7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of [their] conversation.

Point to Christ ALWAYS.

ILLUS – John the Baptist (not a pastor, but a good illustration of this concept) “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

In every way possible, live a life that fulfills the requirements plainly set forth for this office.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 “A bishop then MUST...”

Titus 1:5-9 “... for a bishop MUST...”

The Deacon

QUESTION What does the word “deacon” mean?

QUESTION What is the role of the deacon?

QUESTION Is the office of deacon a legislative office? Does the office carry any authority in the local church?

QUESTION Can anybody be a deacon?

QUESTION Why was the office of deacon instituted?

Let's notice some scripture to help us understand this office:

READ *Acts 6:1-7*

DEFINITION – “Diakoneo” – “to be a servant, attendant, domestic, to serve, wait upon, to wait at a table and offer food and drink to the guests, “

Role is to serve – wait tables. Nothing legislative mentioned in scripture. Not a position of authority. The church is not a democracy. It is a MONARCHY, and ONLY CHRIST is its KING.

III. The Church and its Ordinances

Baptism (Key text – *Acts 8:26-40*)

We are baptized by immersion after salvation. (**QUESTION** – What about all the Bible verses that say we should be baptized when we are babies? **ANSWER** – There are no such verses. **QUESTION** – What about all the Bible verses that say that being baptized is what saves us? **ANSWER** – There are no such verses.

Note the progression in the text:

Philip preached Jesus (vs. 35)

Eunuch believed with all his heart (vs. 37)

Eunuch was then baptized (vs. 38)

Other examples of WHEN we are to be baptized – Acts 2:41; 8:12; 18:8

Method is immersion

DEFINITION - Greek work BAPTIZO means “immersion”. Online Bible Greek Lexicon defines: 1) to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk) 2) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe 3) to overwhelm

QUOTE (Following quote contrasts BAPTIZO with another word, BAPTO) “The clearest example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be ‘dipped’ (bapto) into boiling water and then ‘baptised’ (baptizo) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism. e.g. #Mr 16:16. ‘He that believes and is baptised shall be saved’. Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle! (Bible Study Magazine, James Montgomery Boice, May 1989).” (And it is our baptism by immersion that ILLUSTRATES and TESTIFIES to this change that has already taken place in our life!)

Discuss problem of TRANSLITERATION in scripture.

ILLUS – Eunuch’s baptism plainly describes baptism by immersion (vs. 38)

ILLUS – Jesus’ baptism plainly describes baptism by immersion (Matthew 3:6, 16)

Reasons for baptism:

Jesus commands it (Matthew 28:18-20)

Jesus modeled it, saying it was the right thing to do (Matthew 3:15)

Paul taught that it illustrates our salvation (Romans 6:4) and publicly identifies us with Christ. (DISCUSS THIS – describe Chapel’s method of baptism / testimony... contrast with popular idea that people need to “walk an aisle” to publicly confess... Biblically, baptism IS the public confession... no mention of an aisle in scripture.)

Communion / Lord’s Supper (Key text 1 Cor. 11:23-32)

What is it?

A memorial (vss. 23-24)

A covenant (vs. 25) “Testament” = “covenant” The Lord’s supper symbolizes the new covenant, the new agreement between God and man, that Jesus Christ instituted on the cross.

A proclamation (vs. 26) “shew” = “proclaim” The Lord’s supper is a living sermon. Compare to baptism, which is a public profession of Christ.

How it is to be observed.

Periodically (vs. 26 – “as often”)

Accompanied by self-examination (vs. 28)

This should be a daily thing, anyway. (cf. Luke 9:23, 1 Cor. 15:31)

Should be PARTICULARLY a part of the Lord's Supper, though.

Involves a search for sin, and confession of / repentance from whatever is found (cf. 1 John 1:9)

ONLY after completing such self-examination

Can be observed "unworthily" (vs. 27)

This brings "judgement" (vs. 29)

Caused physical illness to the Corinthians, and even death! (vs. 30) THIS IS SERIOUS BUSINESS!

BOTH of these ordinances are to be observed by every believer!

It is disobedience to remain unbaptised

It is disobedience to avoid the Lord's Supper

CONCLUSION:

Let me repeat our key verse and our text in concluding today:

Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

If Jesus died for the church, and it is the only thing He claimed ownership of, then we need to know what it is and make sure we do right by the church!