

ECCLIESIOLOGY:  
THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH  
Gulf Coast Baptist Church  
Bible Institute

- A. The Use of the Term *Ekklesia* in the New Testament
1. *Ekklesia* occurs 118x in the NT: translated “assembly” - 3x; “church” - 115x
  2. Various uses in the NT
    - a) A riotous mob in Ephesus - Acts 19:32, 41
    - b) The nation of Israel - Acts 7:38
      - (1) better to be understood as an assembly in the wilderness
      - (2) Israel and the Church are not the same - see *below*
    - c) A local body of believers in Christ
      - (1) The church at Jerusalem - Acts 8:1; 11:22
      - (2) The church at Antioch - Acts 13:1
      - (3) The church of God at Corinth - 1 Co. 1:2; 2 Co. 1:1
      - (4) The church in the home of Priscilla and Aquila in Rome - Ro. 16:5
    - d) A group of local churches in a specific geographic region
      - (1) The churches in Syria and Cilicia - Acts 15:41
      - (2) The churches in Galatia - 1 Co. 16:1; Gal. 1:2
      - (3) The churches of Macedonia - 2 Co. 8:1
    - e) The churches of God, as a general term - 1 Co. 11:16; 2 Thess. 1:4
    - f) A local body of believers in the Book of Revelation - Rev. 2-3
    - g) The Church which is the Body of Christ - Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32
- B. Definition of Terms
1. The Church is Not:
    - a) Israel
      - (1) The Church: A Mystery
        - (a) “Mystery” - *mysterion* - a hidden purpose or counsel (Thayer)
          - i) More specifically, a hidden purpose of God that had only recently been revealed
            - (1) “...according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,” - Ro. 16:25
            - (2) “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God...” - Eph. 3:9
            - (3) “Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:” - Col. 1:26
          - ii) The mystery that Jews and Gentiles were now equal heirs in the promises of God - Eph. 3:1-7
            - (1) “This mystery revealed that Gentiles have absolutely equal standing in all respects within this new entity. Gentiles are joint heirs...The Jews do not have a direct line to God and the Gentiles must approach through them, nor are the Gentiles excluded from coming to God.” - Pastor Tim Hoelscher
      - (2) The Church: The Oneness of Jew and Gentile
        - (a) The “*wall of partition*” that existed between Jews and Gentiles because of the Law’s requirements was broken down by Christ
          - i) v. 14 - saved Jews and Gentiles were made one
          - ii) v. 15 - saved Jews and Gentiles were made into one new kind of man

- iii) v. 16 - both Jews and Gentiles were reconciled to God
      - iv) v. 18 - both Jews and Gentiles have equal access to the Father
    - (b) The church is viewed as an entity where Jew or Gentile no longer defines one's identity - Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11
    - (c) The Church is recognized as being distinct from Jews and Gentiles - 1 Co. 10:32
  - (3) Problem Passage: *"And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."* - Gal. 6:16
    - (a) Key passage used by Covenant Theologians in their assertion that the Church is New Israel - such a view justified the spiritualization of physical blessings promised to Israel in the OT
    - (b) This assertion is the result of emphasizing their belief system over basic hermeneutical principles -
    - (c) Principles of biblical study - "in the absence of compelling exegetical and theological considerations, we should avoid the rarer grammatical usages when the common ones make good sense"
      - i) Failure to interpret words according to their normal meaning
        - (1) The term Israel is used 73x in the NT
        - (2) Gal. 6:16 is the only passage Reformed scholars agree refers to a New Israel comprised of Jews and Gentiles
        - (3) Failure to consider how "Israel" is consistently used in the New Testament
        - (4) Failure to find supporting passages in the scriptures
      - ii) Failure to understand the context of Galatians
        - (1) The Galatians had been influenced by Judaizers who were teaching that it was necessary for them observe OT Law principles to demonstrate their personal righteousness
        - (2) "Drawing near the end of his "battle-epistle" with its harsh and forceful attack on the Judaists and its omission of the customary words of thanksgiving, Paul tempers his language with a special blessing for those faithful believing Israelites who, understanding the grace of God and its exclusion of any human works as the ground of redemption, had not succumbed to the subtle blandishments of the deceptive Judaizers. They, not the false men from Jerusalem, are "the Israel of God," or, as he calls them elsewhere, "the remnant according to the election of grace" (cf. Rom. 11:5)" - Dr. S. Lewis Johnson
  - b) Millennial kingdom - the church has not inherited the millennial kingdom
  - c) A building
  - d) A denomination - no particular denomination can lay claim to being "the Church"
2. The Local church is not:
  - a) A body of Christ - there are not multiple bodies of Christ - Eph. 2:14-15; Eph. 4:4-5
  - b) The Body of Christ - the Body consists of all believers - 1 Co. 1:1-2
3. The local church (a quality of the Body of Christ)
  - a) "...a group of baptized believers organized together to meet for the equipping of the saints for their ministry (Eph. 4:11, 12); for the provoking of one another to love and good works; for exhortation (Heb. 10:24, 25); for the exercise of spiritual gifts and the observance of the ordinances (1 Co. 11:18; 1 Pe. 4:10)." - Dr. H. L. Schaefer, class room notes

4. The Church, the Body of Christ

- a) "The whole spiritual body of true Christian believers, regardless of location or circumstance." - Alva J. McClain
- b) "The Church consists of all believers from the Day of Pentecost until the Rapture. It is the result of Spirit baptism and is the organism of which Christ is the Head and each believer is part of the Body, Eph. 1:21, 22. Positionally this Church is complete in the mind of God the Father as He sees believers seated in the heavenliness in Christ, cf. 1 Co. 12:13; Gal. 3:27, 28; Ro. 12:5; Eph. 2:6, 7. It is the realm in which each believer has a spiritual gift to be used for the benefit of the whole Body, 1 Co. 12:4-7; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pe. 4:10." - Pastor David Spurbeck