

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

- I. Early Church and Church Membership
 - A. Automatic enrollment in the membership of “The Body of Christ” as result of Spirit Baptism - 1 Co. 12:12, 13
 - B. Membership in Local Assemblies during the Early Church Period
 1. Jerusalem
 - a) Requirements at the beginning of Acts - Acts 2:38
 - (1) Repentance - *metanoia* - a change of mind about Jesus Christ resulting in salvation
 - (2) Water baptism - outward display of a spiritual reality
 - (3) Indwelling of the Holy Spirit
 - b) Approximately 3,000 persons added on the Day of Pentecost - Acts 2:41
 - c) The addition of new believers (the Church and the local assembly) on a daily basis - Acts 2:47, cf. vs. 41
 - d) THE local assembly resided in Jerusalem until the persecutions - Acts 8:1; 11:22
 2. Local assemblies outside of Jerusalem
 - a) Requirements for membership
 - (1) Salvation - believe on the character of Jesus Christ - Acts 10:43-45
 - (2) Water baptism - Acts 10:48
 - b) The epistles were sent to local of assemblies consisting of members “*To all that be (all the ones being) in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” - Ro. 1:7
 - (1) “*Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:*” - 1 Co. 1:2
 - (2) “*...unto the church which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:*” - 2 Co. 1:1
 - (3) “*...to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*” - Phil. 1:1
 - (4) “*...unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ:...*” - 1 Th. 1:1
 - c) Local assemblies in geographic areas
 - (1) “*...unto the churches of Galatia*” - Gal. 1:2
 - (2) “*And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.*” - Acts 15:41
 - C. Church Membership in the New Testament
 1. Believers in geographic areas organized themselves to meet together - 1 Co. 11:17-18
 2. Indicators pointing towards membership rolls
 - a) “*...the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,...*” - Acts 1:15
 - b) Approximately 3,000 individuals added to the church on the Day of Pentecost - Acts 2:41
 - c) “*Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old,...*” - 1 Ti. 5:9
 - d) “*But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*” - 1 Co. 5:13

- e) Members of the local assembly were given the responsibility for selecting deacons - Acts 6:3
- f) Members of the local church were given the responsibility to send out missionaries - Acts 13:2-4
- g) The Apostles, elders, and the whole assembly decided together on who to send with Paul and Barnabas - Acts 15:22
- h) Members were called on to keep a look out for those not in step with the accepted teaching and practice of the Church
 - (1) *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them"* - Ro. 16:17
 - (2) *"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye out to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;"* - 2 Th. 3:6-7
 - (3) In both instances believers are instructed to stand apart from someone who deviated from teaching that they had formerly adhered to
 - (4) Turning away, or standing apart from, assumes the idea of membership
- i) Epistles were written to pastors and local assemblies dealing a variety of issues within that assembly - Corinthians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
 - (1) Assumes these individuals had some authority to address and correct believers

D. Membership in Local Church

1. Question: Is Church membership important?
 - a) Are para-church groups on par with a local assembly of believers?
 - b) Do churches need to have a membership?
 - c) Membership is important in order to participate in decisions regarding church business - selecting pastors, deacons, missionaries, budgets, etc.
 - d) Providing one an opportunity use their spiritual gift
2. Common reasons for not becoming a member of a local church
 - a) Seeking to avoid responsibility
 - b) Seeking to avoid the potential of church discipline
 - c) Seeking to avoid bad teaching
 - d) Seeking to avoid institutionalism
 - e) Unbalanced involvement with a para-church organization
3. Unhealthy reasons for joining a local church
 - a) Business contacts and social connections
 - b) Convenient location
 - c) Programs
 - d) Opportunity for personal influence
 - e) Religious works of the flesh

E. Purpose of the Local Church?: Micro-level

1. To provide an opportunity for the teaching of the Word of God to produce well-rounded believers - Eph. 4:11-12
2. To provoke one another to love and good works - Heb. 10:24,25
3. To exhort one another - Heb. 10:25
4. To minister one's spiritual gift to other believers - 1 Pe. 4:10
5. The observance of baptism and the Lord's supper - 1 Co. 11:23-24; Acts. 10:47-48