

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

- I. The Beginning of the Church
 - A. Three views on the beginning of the Church
 - 1. Before Pentecost - essentially the same as Israel; takes on a new name in NT
 - 2. At Pentecost - Church began with the coming of the Spirit in Acts 2
 - 3. After Pentecost - Church began at the time of Paul's first missionary trip in Acts 13
 - B. Christ, the Head of His Body helps provides a clue as to when the Church began - Eph. 1:22-23
 - 1. The Body of Christ is associated with Christ's accession into the heavenlies
 - a) Christ made the head of the Church when he ascended to the right-hand of the Father - v. 21-22
 - 2. The Body of Christ was formed when believers began to be baptized by the Spirit into the Body - 1 Cor. 12:13
 - 3. Christ informed his followers that they would be baptized by the Holy Spirit not many days after his ascension - Acts 1:5
 - a) The Holy Spirit first placed in believers and believers placed into Christ happened concurrently at Pentecost
 - b) Andronicus and Junias were "in Christ" before Paul was a believer - Church started before Paul was saved - Rom. 16:7
- II. The Purpose of the Church
 - A. Evangelism
 - 1. Evangelist - *euggelistes* - "a messenger of good" - Vines; "a bringer of good tidings" - Thayer
 - 2. Listed as one of the gifts provided the church (ie Philip and Timothy) - Eph. 4:11
 - 3. Philip the Evangelist - Acts 8:5-29
 - 4. God has provided the church with the spiritual gift of evangelism. The evangelist has a supernatural ability, above and beyond the abilities of other believers, to effectively communicate the Gospel to the lost
 - B. The Church as a Witness
 - a) Believers are to be made to shine as lights - Phil. 2:12-16
 - b) Believers lives can reflect the glory of God who indwells them - 2 Co. 3:18
 - c) Consistently living the Christian life will provide the believer with an opportunity to provide a defense of "the hope that is in you" - 1 Pe. 3:15; see *also* - 1 Pe. 2:11-12; 1 Th. 1:6-10
 - (1) Set aside the Lord God in your hearts
 - (2) Make preparation for an answer - Be ready! - Col. 4:5-6; Eph. 6:15
 - (3) Every believer ought to be able to articulate the Gospel for salvation to the lost - Heb. 5:12-6:2
 - (4) The Hope that is in You - "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" - Col. 1:28
 - (5) The spiritual believer has the potential to live in such an "abnormal" way in the world that their relationship to God will be obvious. This will lead some unbelievers to question the believer about what makes them different and thus provide the believer with the opportunity to present the Gospel for salvation

2. Question: What about the Great Commission?
 - a) Most teaching on the Great Commission fails to consider the following:
 - (1) Unique distinctions within each account of Christ's commission to the Apostles
 - (a) Mark 16:14-20
 - i) Miraculous signs would attend the preaching of the Gospel message to confirm the message
 - ii) Miracles were one of the transitional gifts provided the early church authenticating the Gospel message
 - iii) Instances of miracles in Acts diminish as the historical account progresses
 - (b) Luke 24:44-53
 - i) No command provided in Luke - just a statement as to what would happen in the future
 - ii) The group "commissioned" were stated to be eyewitnesses of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ
 - iii) No believer today can function as a "witness" in the same way the the apostles were during the early years of the church
 - (1) ***Peter stated to Cornelius that the "witnesses" of the resurrected Christ, who drank and ate with Him, were commanded to preach to the people - Acts 10:39-43 (v. 41-42)
 - (2) Paul stated that the ones who came up with Christ from Galilee and spent time with Him after His resurrection were his witnesses - Acts 13:31
 - (c) Matthew 28:16-20
 - i) "Go ye" - Aorist Passive Dependent Participle
 - (1) There is debate among Greek grammarians regarding how to accurately translate dependents
 - (2) The "go ye" could carry the idea of "as ye go", "being gone", or even "having been made to go at a point in time"
 - (3) Did the apostles share a sense of urgency to "go ye into all the world"?
 - (2) Lack of evidence for the Great Commission as the "marching orders" for the church in the NT epistles
 - (a) Evangelism Timeline in Acts:
 - i) All preaching was confined to Jerusalem and Judea until the persecutions which followed Stephen's martyrdom. This took place 5 years after the giving of the Great Commission
 - ii) Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, was witnessed to by a reluctant Peter some 10 years after the giving of the Great Commission
 - iii) The persecuted believers fled as far away as Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch, but were still only preaching to the Jews some 13 years after the giving of the Great Commission
 - iv) Biblical evidence points to the Apostles remaining in Jerusalem until at least A.D. 50 (some 20 years after the giving of the Great Commission)
 - v) No mention of God ever rebuking the Apostles for remaining in Jerusalem
 - (b) Peter and John
 - i) 1 and 2 Peter both fail to make mention of the Great Commission
 - ii) The Gospel of John, which contains the greatest amount of church teaching among the Gospels, makes no reference to the Great Commission

- iii) 1, 2, and 3 John all fail to make any mention of the Great Commission
- iv) Not one of the 7 churches addressed in Revelation is commended or rebuked regarding whether or not they carried out the Great Commission
- (c) Paul
 - i) No record in Acts or in any of the NT epistles that Paul instructed believers to carry out "The Great Commission"
 - ii) Paul repeatedly states that "he" (an apostle) had been commissioned to preach the Gospel - *1 Co. 9:16-17; Eph. 3:7-8; 1 Ti. 1:11; 1 Th. 2:4
- (d) NT Epistles - Miscellaneous
 - i) No epistle commends or rebukes a church depending on whether or not they carried out the Commission
 - ii) Approximately 11 NT epistles were written before the first account of the Great Commission in the Gospel of Luke
- b) Conclusion:
 - (1) The Great Commission was a task specifically given to a select group of individuals who had personally witnessed the Resurrected Christ. The apostles had a zeal and natural inclination to share the Gospel with the Jewish people but were reluctant to expand their ministry to the Gentiles. The apostles and the Jewish believers did not begin to evangelize the Gentiles until they were "made to go". The apostles' preaching ministry was used by God to establish the foundation of the early church. There is little New Testament evidence that the Great Commission was a command to the Body of Christ. Rather, God's plan for evangelism is through the evangelistic and the opportunities provided the believer by living a consistent spiritual life in the world.
 - (2) The Church today witnesses by encouraging the evangelist to do the good works the God has laid out for him to do. Believers, gifted otherwise, are to be maturing and living as spiritual believers in the world. As this occurs, the Holy Spirit will convince unbelievers of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The believer is to be prepared and looking out for the opportunities that God will provide them to share the message of salvation as a result of their consistent witness.

C. Teaching

- 1. The Word is Imperative for Believers to grow into maturity
 - a) God has provided the church with teaching gifts for its edification - Eph. 4:11-12
 - (1) The church is encouraged to submit to their spiritual leadership and teaching so as to imitate their manner of life - Heb. 13:7
 - (2) Paul commends the believers for accepting his teaching as the word of God which resulted in them mimicking Paul's manner of life - 1 Th. 2:13
 - (3) Paul's emphasized the teaching of "Christ in you the hope of glory" wherever he went with the intention of presenting all believers "perfect" in Christ Jesus
 - b) The Word taught must be "sincere" - without deceit - 1 Pe. 2:2
 - (1) Sincere - *adolos* - "unmixed, unadulterated"
 - (2) Scriptures lose their authority when they are mixed with untruth
 - (a) Christ spoke with authority because his explanation of the Word was "sincere" unlike the Pharisees who taught traditions of men - Mt. 7:29
 - (b) The scriptures can be twisted and perverted to teach a false message resulting in destruction - 2 Pe. 3:16
 - c) The Word taught must be contextually accurate - 2 Ti. 2:15
- 2. Accurate teaching of the Word of God is critical to the church fulfilling its purpose

- a) Preach the Word in season and out of season - 2 Ti. 4:2
 - b) The Word is to be taught to individuals so that they can in turn teach it to others - 2 Ti. 2:2
- D. Loving One Another - The Importance of the New Commandment
- 1. The New Commandment is a recurring theme of the NT writers (28x)
 - a) Overwhelming evidence of the importance of the New Commandment to the church in the NT epistles
 - b) 28 specific references to the New Commandment in the NT epistles written by Paul, Peter, and John
 - c) 6 specific references to churches or individuals who were commended for their love for one another
 - 2. The Results of Loving One Another:
 - a) Spiritual maturity - Eph. 4:11-16 (**v. 15-16**)
 - b) Proper use of spiritual gifts - 1 Co. 13:1-6
 - c) Encourages one another to love and good works - Heb. 10:24
 - d) Promotes Oneness within the church:
 - (1) Love is the unifying bond consisting of perfectness - Col. 3:14"
 - (2) In love the believer is to guard the unity from the Spirit - Eph. 4:1-3
 - e) Serves as a distinguishing mark for all the world to see that one is a genuine follower of Christ - Jo. 13:35