

ECCLESIOLOGY:  
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. Development of 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) Jerusalem - The first local assembly of believers
        - (1) The eleven - Acts 1:13
        - (2) A number of women, including Mary - Acts 1:14
        - (3) The brothers of the Lord - Acts 1:14
        - (4) 120 disciples - Acts 1:15
        - (5) Approximately 3,000 persons added on the Day of Pentecost - Acts 2:41
        - (6) Others were being saved on a daily basis - Acts 2:47
      - c) Jerusalem was the central hub of the church until the persecutions - Acts 8:1; 11:22
    - 2. Distinctives of the Early Church
      - a) The Church was being built upon the foundation provided by the apostles and New Testament prophets
        - (1) Acts 2:42 - the apostle’s doctrine
        - (2) Eph. 2:20 - the apostle’s and prophets provided the foundation for the Church
        - (3) 1 Cor. 3:10-15 - other built upon the foundation laid by the apostles
      - b) The Early Church assembled regularly in homes and other buildings
        - (1) The church of Jerusalem met in multiple homes - Acts 2:46
        - (2) Aquila and Pricila - 1 Cor. 16:19; Ro. 16:35
        - (3) Nymphas (Laodecia) - Col. 4.15
        - (4) Philemon (Colossee) - Philemon 1:2
        - (5) School of Tyrannus - Acts 19:9-10
        - (6) The idea of church became more clinical with the establishment of “church” buildings
          - (a) Loss of connectivity
          - (b) Loss of community
          - (c) Loss of family mindset
      - c) There was unity among those who met together - Acts 4:32
        - (1) The relationship among members of the early church
          - (a) Spontaneous
          - (b) Simplistic
          - (c) Organic (real and authentic)
      - d) The early church held their worldly goods in common - Acts 2:44; 2 Cor. 8:1-5

3. Local assemblies outside of Jerusalem
    - a) Local assemblies developed outside of Jerusalem as the Gospel spread forth from Jerusalem
      - (1) Persecution and Paul's commission played a major role in the expansion of The Church
      - (2) Acts details the westward expansion of The Church
        - (a) Church at Antioch - Acts 13:1
        - (b) Church in Syria and Cilicia - Acts 15:41
        - (c) Churches in Galatia - 1 Co. 16:1; Gal. 1:2
        - (d) Churches in Macedonia - 2 Cor. 8:1
        - (e) Churches of the Gentiles - Ro. 16:4
    - b) The epistles were sent to local of assemblies consisting of members
      - (1) *"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
      - (2) *"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
      - (3) *"...unto the church which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:"* - 2 Co. 1:1
      - (4) *"...to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:"* - Phil. 1:1
      - (5) *"...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 walketh 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