

# CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

for New Church Members

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## LESSON FOUR -

### THE CHURCH AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

#### INTRODUCTION

The word church comes from the Greek word "ecclesia" which means "assembly" or "congregation." In Matthew 16:18 JESUS declared that He would build His church, "**And upon this rock I will build my church (assembly) and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it**" (Matthew 16:18). At that time there were many assemblies or congregations. Each had its own founder, its own requirements for membership, its own rules, officers, purposes, etc. JESUS declared that He would establish an assembly of His own. Today there are many fine clubs and organizations, but only the church was established by JESUS. In this chapter we want to learn what kind of assembly JESUS established. Who can be members of one of JESUS' churches? How is such a church organized and governed? What are its duties and functions?

#### I. THE MEMBERSHIP OF A CHURCH

There were two requirements established by JESUS for those who would become members of His church.

##### A. MEMBERS MUST BE BORN AGAIN (SAVED)

In order to see clearly what we must do in order to become members of a church, let us look at the first church, the church at Jerusalem. In Acts 2:47 we read, "**And the LORD added to the church daily such as should be saved.**" According to the Bible, the LORD added to the church those who were saved. Since only a saved, born again believer was added by the LORD to the first church, only saved believers are accepted for membership by Baptist churches today. The church is the assembly of those who know CHRIST JESUS as LORD and SAVIOUR.

##### B. MEMBERS MUST BE BAPTIZED

In Acts 2:41 there is a statement that tells us more about the membership of the first church. "**Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousands souls.**" Here again they received the word (believed

in CHRIST) and in addition, they were baptized. This pattern can be seen throughout the book of Acts. (Acts 8:12-13, 36-37; 10:44-48, etc.) Thus, in Baptist churches today, individuals are accepted as members after they have received CHRIST and have been baptized.

## II. THE ORGANIZATION OF A CHURCH

### A. THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

Every assembly has a head. But who is the head of a church? The Bible states plainly that CHRIST Himself is the head of the church. CHRIST not only founded His assembly, but He continues to rule it. **"And He is the head of the body, the church"** (Colossians 1:18). **"Christ is the head of the church"** (Ephesians 5:23). Although these words were written many years after JESUS had ascended into Heaven, the Bible says CHRIST is the head of the body. When CHRIST ascended into Heaven He did not appoint another to be the head of the assembly. He has no vicar on the earth today. He and He alone continues to exercise this authority.

### B. CHRIST EXERCISES HIS AUTHORITY THROUGH EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH

There are leaders in a church, but there can be no bosses. The church is a spiritual democracy. Matters affecting the church should be decided by all the church members, the congregation. Through discussion and voting the church decides upon the business of the church. The pastor and other leaders can and should speak their opinion, but in the end each member must vote as he feels led by the HOLY SPIRIT. This pattern can be seen in the New Testament. In the 6th chapter of Acts the apostles led the church in Jerusalem to see the need for deacons to assist in the work of the church, but it was the church which acted. **"And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen . . ."** (Acts 6:5).

In a different case, in Acts 15:22, we read. **"Then pleased it the apostles and elders (pastors), with the whole church, to send chosen men . . ."** Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, **"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . deliver such an one unto Satan"** (I Corinthians 5:4,5). In all of these instances, the apostles and pastors led the churches to see a need and the church decided what they would do. Because the HOLY SPIRIT lives in every Christian, every member of the church can know the will of GOD. They can expect to find and express His will through the action of the church as a whole.

### C. THE OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

#### 1. The Pastor

The Pastor (also called "elder" in the New Testament) is the chief officer of a church. The qualifications of a pastor are outlined in I Tim. 3:2-7.

**"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house,**

**having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."**

Peter points to three duties of the pastor in I Peter 5:1-4:

**"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over Gods heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."**

First, he is to **"feed the flock (church) of GOD."** That is, He is to preach and teach the Word of GOD (see Acts 6:2). Second, he is to "exercise oversight" or lead the church in its activities and give help to the members in their Christian lives. Third, the pastor is admonished not to "lord it over the heritage of God." In other words, he is not to be a "boss," but rather he should be an example of Christian living to the church.

In return for his devotion to the work of GOD, the pastor should be supported financially by the church. The Bible says in I Corinthians 9:14, **"Even so hath the LORD ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel."** (See also I Corinthians 9:4-13; I Timothy 5:17-18; Galatians 6:6). Pastors are chosen by the church - but first of all a man of GOD, sent by GOD.

## 2. Deacons

The word "deacon" comes from a Greek word which means "to serve." The first deacons were chosen by the church in Jerusalem to assist the pastors in the work of the church. **"And in those days . . . there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of GOD and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business . . . And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen . . ."** (Acts 6:1-3, 5). These men who were chosen not only assumed responsibility in the administration of the church, but also preached and taught (Acts 6:8-15; 8:5-40). Further qualifications of deacons can be found in I Tim. 3:8-13. As in the case of the first deacons, the church chooses the deacons.

**"Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."**

### 3. Other Officers

Other church officers may include a church clerk or secretary, treasurer, Sunday School officers and teachers. All are elected by the church and are responsible to it.

## III. THE PURPOSE AND DUTIES OF A CHURCH

### A. THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Bible declares that the church is the body of CHRIST. "**Now ye (the church) are the body of Christ**" (1 Corinthians 12:27; Colossians 1:18, 24). Just as our bodies carry out our plans and desires, so every church is to carry out the desires and the work of CHRIST in its community. Your church is CHRIST Himself working in your community.

Every member of a church is related to the whole church like one part of the body is related to another. "**For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ**" (1 Corinthians 12:12). "**Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular**" (1 Corinthians 12:27). Since this is true, there are some things we need to remember concerning the church.

First, every member of a church has a task to do (1 Corinthians 12:18).

**"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."**

Second, just as in the physical body, our tasks as individual members of the body of CHRIST, the church, may be different (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).

**"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.**

**Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."**

Third, GOD is the One who decides what our part is in the work of the church, and He also gives us the power and ability to do our part (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

**"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."**

Fourth, in this relationship within the church, what we do has a direct effect on our fellow Christians in the church (1 Corinthians 12:22, 26). If we suffer, all suffer. If we do well, all are praised. If we sin, all the members of the church are criticized.

Fifth, as there is no part in the body which is unimportant, so it is in the church. All have a necessary part to do and are important in the work of the church. For the church to be strong, each one must do his part well.

## **B. THE CHURCH HELPS ITS MEMBERS GROW**

The Bible says to each member of the church, "**Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church**" (1 Corinthians 14:12). One purpose of the church is to help each member grow "**in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**" (II Peter 3:18). The services of the church are planned to help us grow as Christians. The fellowship, praise to GOD, prayer, and preaching of the Word of GOD in the church all help others grow through our participation in the work and in the services of the church.

## **C. THE CHURCH IS TO CARRY OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST**

**"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"** (Matthew 28:19-20). These are the words JESUS spoke before He ascended back into Heaven. These are His orders to His churches. The churches have the responsibility to go into all the world, preaching, teaching, and baptizing. You as a member of a church have a responsibility to help in this work by witnessing to your lost friends and to lost members of your family. We are CHRIST's ambassadors to the world. It is as though GOD did beseech the world by us to be reconciled to Him (II Corinthians 5:20). Your church should be busy in your community, winning the lost to CHRIST, for this is the work of the church.

## THE LORD'S SUPPER

In reading the New Testament, a person discovers that the churches established by the apostles had two ordinances or observances. One was (Baptism) and the other was the LORD's Supper. In Matthew 26:26-30 we read the following account of the first such supper:

**"And as they were eating, JESUS took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Fathers kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."**

### I. THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The LORD's Supper is a memorial supper. As such it helps us to remember three things:

#### A. THAT JESUS DIED FOR US

On the night of the supper, JESUS said of the bread. **"This is my body."** Likewise of the drink He said, **"This is my blood... which is shed for many for the remission of sins."** The elements of the LORD's supper are symbols of JESUS' death. They remind us of the death He died that we might have eternal life as a gift. The bread and wine are symbols only, and do not, in the celebration of the LORD's supper, become the actual body and blood of JESUS. The words of JESUS here are like His words **"I am the door"** (John 10:9). When JESUS said, **"I am the door"** He was teaching His followers that eternal life was through Him. The door was a symbol to help them understand who He was. So here, the elements used in the LORD's Supper are reminders of what He did for us.

#### B. THAT OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES ARE SUSTAINED BY HIM

When we eat the LORD's Supper, we are to remember that just as our physical bodies require food in order that they may live and grow in Him. The LORD's Supper reminds us that we must maintain a spiritual relationship to CHRIST in order that we may grow spiritually.

#### C. THAT HE IS COMING AGAIN

**"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the LORD's death till He come."** (I Corinthians 11:26). JESUS not only died, He ascended into Heaven, and He is coming again. JESUS left us the Supper to keep us watching for His return.

### II. THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

**"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the LORD, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the LORD. But let a man examine himself, and so**

**let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (I Corinthians 11:27-28).**

These words of warning were spoken to church members. Paul was explaining that the manner of some in eating the Supper had been wrong. They had been greedy and had forgotten the purpose of the Supper, "**not discerning the LORD's body.**" That is, they were not concerned for the other members of the body of CHRIST (the church) in their eating. (1 Corinthians 11:21,22).

Some have said because of these words, "I cannot take the Supper; I am not worthy." This is a misrepresentation of this verse. The word, "Unworthily" does not refer to the character of those partaking of the Supper, but to the manner in which they eat. No person is worthy in himself, but those who believe in CHRIST and obey His commands may eat worthily of the Supper, by remembering His death for our sins, and by fixing their thoughts upon Him who gave Himself for us.

Every church member should eat the LORD's Supper, because of CHRIST's command. Just as He commanded those who believe to be baptized, so He commanded that they should eat this Supper in memory of Him. No baptized believer has a right to fail to obey this command. Neither baptism nor the LORD's Supper is essential to our salvation, but both are essential to our obedience. We are to do both just as He said it, "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23).

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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