

Chapter 44: The Church: Its Nature, Its Marks, and Its Purposes

A. The Nature of the Church

1. Definition: *The church is the community of all true believers for all time.*
[Eph. 1:22-23, 5:25; Matt. 16:18, Deut 4:10, Acts 7:38, Heb. 12:22-23]
2. The Church Is Invisible, Yet Visible
 - The invisible church is the church as God sees it. 1 Tim 2.19; 1 Sam 16.7
 - The visible church is the church as Christians on earth see it. [1 Cor. 1:2, Philm 1-2]
 - The visible church will always include unbelievers [Acts 20:29-30; Matt 7.15-16]
3. The Church Is Local and Universal [Rom. 16:5, 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 9:31, 1 Cor. 12:28]
 - In the New Testament, the word "church" may be applied to a group of believers at any level, ranging from a very small group meeting in a private home to all true believers in the universal church.
4. Metaphors for the Church
 - Family [1 Tim. 5:1-2]
 - The bride of Christ [2 Cor. 11:2]
 - Branches on a vine (John 15:5), an olive tree (Rom. 11:17-24), a field of crops and a building (1 Cor. 3:6-9), a harvest (Matt. 13:1-30), a new temple and a new group of priests (1 Peter 2:5), God's house (Heb. 3:6)
 - The Body of Christ
 - The whole body [1 Cor. 12:16-17]
 - The rest of the body, distinguished from the head [Eph 4:15-16]
5. The Church and Israel
 - Dispensational view: the church and Israel are two distinct groups, at least in this age and the millennium
 - Non-dispensational view: the church is the "new Israel" or the new "people of God" [Rom. 2:28-29, 4:11-12, 9:6-8; Gal. 3:29, Eph. 2:14-16]
6. The Church and the Kingdom of God
 1. The church is not the kingdom [Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31]
 2. The kingdom creates the church
 3. The church witnesses to the kingdom [Matt 24:14]
 4. The church is the instrument of the kingdom [Matt. 10:8, Luke 10:17]
 5. The church is the custodian of the kingdom [Matt. 16:19]

B. The Marks of the Church (Distinguishing Characteristics)

Luther and Calvin agreed that true churches are marked by:

1. Pure preaching of the Word
2. Right administration of the sacraments
(baptism and the Lord's supper).

I would add today:

3. Attempting to function as a church
the question of "parachurch" organizations

The question of which churches are true and false churches today.

C. The Purposes of the Church

1. Ministry to God: Worship [Col. 3:16]
2. Ministry to Believers: Nurture [Eph. 4:11-13]
3. Ministry to the World: Evangelism and Mercy [Matt. 28:18-20, Luke 6:35-36]
4. Keeping These Purposes in Balance

To order CD's e-mail Trent Poling ctpoling@msn.com or talk to Trent in the sound booth before or after class. Trent also has electronic copies of these outlines starting in about June, 2005, and the outlines are posted on the web site www.christianessentialsbc.com

Schedule (tentative regarding which topics will be covered):

June 22: Union with Christ (chap. 43)

June 29: BEGIN UNIT 5: Doctrine of the Church

The Nature, Marks, and Purposes of the Church (chap. 44)

July 6: The purity and unity of the church

(chap. 45)

July 13: The power of the church; church discipline

(chap. 46)

July 20 – Aug 31: Class vacation

Sept. 7: Class resumes: Church government (chap. 47)