

Ecclesiology

The Doctrine of the Church

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Ecclesiology is the doctrine of the Church.

I THE MEANING OF THE WORD

The word "church" does not mean the building in which the congregation meets; neither is it as the Catholics say, the Papal system. Others contend that it is a company, or a club, just an organization. The Church is not an organization, but an *organism*.

The following may surprise most students of the Word, but nevertheless, it is true. The word "church" cannot be found in the New Testament. The word "church," is a *rendition*, and not a translation. This same word "church" is a rendition of the word *ecclesia*, which means a called-out company, or assembly. If we should call Bible things by Bible names correctly, we would call it the assembly of God in Christ, instead of the Church of God in Christ.

The word *ecclesia* always means a called-out company, or assembly. It refers to all classes of people; it is not limited to believers in Christ. There are three references in the Bible that refer to three different kinds of people. None of them are related, yet they are called-out companies, or assemblies.

A A Mob.

"When Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not, And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself to the theater. Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the *assembly* [*ecclesia*: that is a mob, and not believers] was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together... And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said.... Ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches [this word means temple; it is not from the word *ecclesia*], nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.... But if ye inquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful *assembly* [this is the same word *ecclesia*, and does not mean believers].... And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the *assembly* [again the word *ecclesia*]" (Acts 19:30-32, 35, 37, 39, 41).

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B The Children of Israel.

Certainly the children of Israel were a called-out company from Egypt, but we know that they were not the body of Christ. Christ had not been manifested in the flesh as yet. "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers who received the lively oracles to give unto us" (Acts 7:38).

C The Body of Christ.

By this we mean the body of believers in the Lord Jesus. The New Testament abounds with references to the *ecclesia*, the called-out company, or assembly, from the world to Christ. The following are a few: God "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the *church* [*ecclesia*, meaning called-out company, or assembly], which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23). "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the *church* [*ecclesia*, meaning called-out company or assembly], and gave himself for it... This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the *church* [*ecclesia*, meaning called-out company, or assembly]" (Ephesians 5:25, 32).

II THE USE OF THE WORD

Knowing that the word "church" is a rendition from the Greek, *ecclesia*, meaning called-out company, or assembly, we shall turn our attention to those portions of Scripture dealing with the body of believers. The word *ecclesia* is used in the following ways:

A A Local Assembly (church).

"Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto *the church* of the Thessalonians..." (1st Thessalonians 1:1). "Unto the *church* of God which is at Corinth..." (1st Corinthians 1:2).

B Local Assemblies (churches).

This has reference to several local bodies. "Paul... and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace be to you and peace" (Galatians 1:1-3).

C The Body of Living Believers (unnumbered).

We must explain that by this we mean a group of believers, living in a certain section, without reference to a local assembly, and without number. For instance, a minister may speak of the Church of Chicago, the Church of Denver, etc. we immediately know that he is referring to all Christian believers in these cities. The best illustration in the Word is: "Ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the *church* of God, and wasted it" (Galatians 1:13). Saul (Paul) did not limit his persecution to one certain assembly, or several local assemblies. He went *everywhere*, hailing into prison, and voting the death penalty for the early Christians. He considered all Christians as *The Church*.

D The Complete Body of Christ.

The complete body of Christ is called the *Church*, and is composed of all believers from Pentecost to the Rapture. "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the *church*, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

III WHAT THE CHURCH IS NOT

A The Church Is Not Israel.

"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God" (1st Corinthians 10:32). Here is revealed that there are three classes of people

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today: Jew, Gentile and Church. When a Jew is saved, he ceases to be a Jew, and becomes a Christian. When a Gentile accepts Christ, he ceases to be a Gentile, and becomes a Christian. "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27-29). The Church (Body of Christ) is not spiritual Israel: "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain *one new man*, so making peace" (Ephesians 2:14-15). The Body of Christ (the Church) is a *new man*, and not Israel, whether spiritual Israel or revived Israel.

B The Church Is Not the Kingdom.

CHURCH

- 1 No heirs of the Church.
- 2 There are elders of the Church.
- 3 No Sons of the Church.
- 4 Church called a temple (Ephesians 2:21).
- 5 Church is here.
- 6 Church was never a subject of prophecy (Ephesians 3: 5,9).
- 7 Church is to be built up (Ephesians 4:12).

KINGDOM

- 1 The Church is heir of the kingdom.
- 2 No elders of the kingdom.
- 3 Sons of the kingdom.
- 4 Kingdom never called a temple.
- 5 Kingdom is not here, for the King is not present (Matthew 6:10).
- 6 Kingdom is the one subject of prophecy.
- 7 Kingdom is to be set up (Acts 15:16).

IV WHAT THE CHURCH IS

A It Is a Mystery.

"By revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.... And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:3-6,9). A "mystery" in Scripture means a "truth revealed for the first time." In the above verses, the Holy Spirit shows us that *The Church* (Body of Christ) was first revealed to the Apostle Paul, and that it was not known by the Old Testament prophets. The truth of The Church was not hidden in Old Testament writings, but was hid in God.

B It Is the Body of Which Christ Is the Head.

"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

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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.... 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 honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1st Corinthians 12:12-14, 25-27).

The Body is an organism composed of many members. All members do not have the same function. The Church is not a physical body, but a spiritual body. Believers in Christ are made members of that spiritual body by the Spirit's baptism. There are those who hold that 1st Corinthians 12:13 is speaking of water baptism, but this argument can easily be refuted by another Scripture. 1st Corinthians 12:13 says that we are made members of the Body by *baptism* (Spirit's), while Ephesians 3:6 declares we are made members of that Body by the *Gospel*. Both are correct. If 1st Corinthians 12:13 speaks of water baptism, then water baptism is an essential part of the Gospel of Ephesians 3:6. We know, however, that water baptism has no part in the Gospel whatsoever. *The Gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ* (1st Corinthians 15:1-4).

As is true of the physical body, so it is of the spiritual Body; when one member of the Body suffers, all members suffer with it. Not one Christian can suffer persecution without the whole Body hurting also. One member cannot grieve, but that the whole Body grieves with it. When the Body suffers, the Head also suffers. When we are persecuted, Christ is also persecuted: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4).

Remember that the Body is an organism and must be considered as such. A building, for example, can be repaired by replacing old doors and windows, and the like, with new ones, but when part of a body is removed, such as an arm, leg, eye, and the like, the part can never be replaced. If it were possible for a member of the Body of Christ to lose his salvation, then the Body of Christ would be mutilated, and this could never happen. The following are four characteristics of the Body of Christ:

- 1 *Oneness*. A body is one, a complete whole, an organic unity. So is the Body of Christ.
- 2 *Deathlessness*. The Body of Christ will never die, for it is connected with a living Head.
- 3 *Manifestation*. The one purpose of the Body of Christ is to manifest, or reveal Christ. “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).
- 4 *Service*. The thoughts and the plans of the head are to be carried out by the body. Likewise, the Body of Christ is to carry out the will of its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. What He commands we must do. His will shall govern our movements.

C It Is a Building.

“Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

The apostles and New Testament prophets are the foundation of the Building (Church). They were the first ones to believe in the Lord Jesus, and they were the first ones to proclaim the Lord Jesus.

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“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1st Peter 2:5). We believers are living stones of this new building of God. When Solomon’s Temple was built, there was no sound of hammer, chisel, or saw. All materials were formed beforehand. So are we, for we were selected before the foundation of the earth was laid. The inside stones of the temple could not be seen, for they were covered with cedarwood and gold. Only the gold could be seen. We, the living stones of the Building of God, are not to be seen. Christ only is to be seen.

The building was erected of different colored stones; even so the Building of God is composed of black, red, yellow and white races. God dwelt in the temple, and He abides in us.

D It Is the Bride.

Some have contended that the Bride of Christ is the same as Israel. However, there is one Scripture which disproves this theory, and that is Revelation 22:17: “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” This passage declares that the Spirit and the Bride are extending the invitation to sinners to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Bride is Israel, then it is the Spirit and Israel extending the invitation. We know that is not true, for the greater part of Israel is still in unbelief today. Who is inviting, or urging people to accept Christ? It is the Church, not Israel. Therefore, the Bride is the Church, the Body of believers.

Ephesians 5:25-32 clearly points to the fact that husband and wife have the same relationship as that of Christ and His Bride, the Church. We see this in verses 28-30: “So ought men to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”

- 1 *The Bride Is Purchased By Christ.* “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and *gave himself* for it” (Ephesians 5:25). See also 1st Corinthians 6:19-20. In the Orient men purchased their wives; the price became her dowry. Christ bought his Church with His own precious blood. His blood is her dowry forever!
- 2 *The Bride Is Espoused to Christ.* “I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have *espoused* you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2nd Corinthians 11:2). The Oriental marriage differs greatly from marriage as we know it. The Eastern custom of marriage took place after the following manner: First, the bride was bought (we have been bought by Christ); second, the ceremony was performed, inaugurating the espousal period, which lasted about a year. During this time the bride was considered the wife of her husband, yet they did not live together. The one year waiting period was protection of the future home. If there were any blemishes against the character and conduct of the bride, they would come to light during this time. The Bride of Christ is now in her espousal period. During this interval the blemishes of the Bride, if any, will certainly manifest themselves. History has proved that there have been many who have had the form of godliness, but have denied the power thereof. These blemishes (these men) vanish away; finally comes the consummation of the marriage.
- 3 *The Bride Is Married to Christ.* “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready. And to

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her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Revelation 19:7-8). “Then shall the Realm of heaven be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride” (Matthew 25:1). This is the consummation of Christ’s marriage to His Church. The espousal period is over; she is now with her husband, and so shall she ever be with Him (1st Thessalonians 4:17).

V THE GIFTS TO THE BODY

“Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When He ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:7, 8, 11).

Gifts given by the Holy Spirit for the INSTRUCTION and LEADERSHIP of the Local Church.

A Apostles.

This was the first gift to the Church (Body). The word “apostle” in the Greek is the same as the word “missionary” in Latin, meaning “the sent one.” Of course, the Church has missionaries (sent ones) today, but no apostles. Apostolic credentials included having seen the risen Christ (which Paul also did - 1st Corinthians 9:1).

B Prophets.

To these men God gave His revelations. At first, the Church did not have the written New Testament, yet it needed to know the doctrines of God; therefore, God gave to men His unwritten Word; these in turn gave it to the people. In this sense, the Church has no prophets today for we have God’s completely revealed truth in the Old and New Testaments.

C Evangelists.

Another gift to the Church was evangelists. These men fervently heralded the Gospel. They were men of humility, burdened for the lost. Paul told Timothy to do the work of an evangelist (2nd Timothy 4:5). The evangelist appears to be primarily a preacher of the gospel (the Good News of Christ death, burial and resurrection). It is not an office of church government. The day of or the gift of the evangelist is *not* over.

D Pastors and Teachers.

The word “pastor” means “shepherd.” The pastor is to be the shepherd of his sheep, looking after his flock, weeping and rejoicing with them. The crying need of the Church today is for pastors. Blessed is the man who has a pastor’s heart. A pastor is not only called to preach three sermons a week, but he is called to pastor, shepherd, look after, care for, love, protect and to “feed” the sheep. Every pastor should be a man who is able to *teach* the Word to his flock. Where will the church members get the Word if not from the pastor? All of the truth some people will get will be at a Sunday service.

Some distinguish between the pastor and the teacher, believing that there are those who are called only to be teachers. This may be so, but we know that all pastors are to also be teachers. All teachers may not be pastors, but all pastors *must* be teachers.

- Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit for the BENEFIT of the Local Church - never for the primary benefit of the believer.

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VI THE LOCAL CHURCH

We believe that the Body of Christ is composed of all believers from Pentecost to the Rapture. We stress the importance of the *local* church, or assembly. The local assembly is the physical body by which the Body (Church) is manifested. God stresses the importance of the local church by giving it officers and ordinances. He who is ashamed of the local assembly is ashamed of that which was established at Pentecost. The local church, as well as the Body of Christ, was established at Pentecost when The Holy Spirit began to indwell all believers.

A Its Organization.

The Scriptures indicate that there was some organization, but not like today. It was not copied after the synagogue. It was entirely different.

B Its Officers.

1 *Deacons*. 1st Timothy 3:8-13 gives the requirements for deacons. The deacons were not chosen to run the church, but to minister to the church (*diakonos* means one who executes the commands of another).

2 *Bishops and Elders*. There is a difference between the early Church and that of today as to bishops. The early Church had *many* bishops in one local church; today, some denominations have *one* bishop over many local churches. The elders were called by that name because of their age. There is a certain wisdom that comes with age and experience. An elder was an elderly man. Titus 1:5-7 says, "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre." According to this, the elder and bishop were the same. The word "elder" refers to the person, while the word "bishop" refers to the office. Every bishop was an elder, but every elder was not a bishop. The word "bishop" means "overseer." The "overseers" of the local churches were old men. This group of bishops composed what is known as the presbytery (1st Timothy 1:4).

C Its Purpose.

The purpose of the Church is to glorify God in the building up of the Body of Christ in the holy faith; and to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth, winning, baptizing, and teaching.

VII DISCIPLINE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Even though it is true that the Church is under grace rather than law, believers sometimes choose to live in the flesh (Carnal Christians). The Lord has laid down rules of discipline for His local church. There were three steps in Church discipline, and they are as follows:

A Judgment by Self.

"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1st Corinthians 11:31). The believer knows when he has sinned and should immediately confess it to God (1st John 1:9). If he confesses that sin, he has judged himself. It is forgiven, and he shall never be judged for it again. Let us stress the word "confess" however. Confess does not just mean "to admit", that is to own up to; it goes deeper than that. It means to take one's stand against.

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B Judgment by the Church.

If a sinning brother will not judge himself, then he must be judged by the local church. 1st Corinthians 5:11, 12 says “I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?” Yes, fellowship in the local church should be withheld from the erring brother as judgment. Some term this “back-door revival.” This extreme judgment should be meted out only after the effort to restore him. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness: Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

C Judgment by God.

God will judge habitually unrepentant saints through chastisement (Hebrews 12:5-13).

VIII ORDINANCES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

The Church has two ordinances: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism is to be observed at the beginning of the Christian life; the Lord’s Supper is taken throughout the Christian life. We emphasize the fact that these are ordinances of the Church, and not sacraments.

A Baptism.

Baptism is from the Greek word *baptizo*, meaning to dip, to plunge, to immerse for the purpose of dying a garment or fabric another color. It never means sprinkling, or pouring.

- 1 *Obligation* (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 6:1-6; Colossians. 2:12). All believers are obliged to be baptized. One does not have to pray about it to seek God’s will in the matter. The Lord has commanded it.
- 2 *Administration*. Nearly every denomination demands that their ministers, who administer the ordinance of baptism, must be ordained.
- 3 *Explanation*. Baptism is a public declaration of faith in Christ by the believer before man. It is his outward demonstration of an inward act, and is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Immersion fully portrays the place of death; there are some people, even today, who have met actual physical death after coming up out of the baptismal waters. Those who have come out of other religions evaluate the ordinance of baptism more highly than those who have been raised in Christian homes. Not only does baptism show the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it also shows the believer’s identification *with* Christ. Baptism is his full declaration of his own death in Christ (2nd Corinthians 5:14): dead to sin, dead to self and dead to the old life. It is also his declaration of being raised with Christ, after burying the old life, to walk in newness of life with Him.

It is not a saving ordinance. Man is saved by faith alone. Salvation occurs *before* baptism. It is true, however, that baptism is a public declaration of faith before man, and God looks not upon the baptismal waters, but upon the heart of man.

The baptism of all believers, as recorded in the Word, pictures the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The baptism of John the Baptist looked *forward* to Christ’s death and resurrection, and our baptism today looks *back* to the death and resurrection of our Lord.

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- 4 *Participation.* Who should be baptized? *Only* the believer! “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Faith is first, then baptism. Again the question arises, “Does man have to be baptized to be saved?” No, for this Scripture says that he that *believeth not* shall be damned. *If* water baptism were essential, the Lord would have added these words, “He that is not baptized is damned.” The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians said, “I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius... For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be of none effect” (1st Corinthians 1:14, 17). If baptism were necessary for salvation, Paul would not have boasted in the fact that he had baptized so few. He plainly states that baptism had nothing to do with the Gospel (Romans 1:16), for Christ had sent him not to baptize, but to preach.

It is impossible to baptize an unbeliever, for if he is an unbeliever *before* he is immersed, he will be an unbeliever when he comes out of the baptismal waters.

What is the age limit for baptism? Some parents contend that twelve years of age is the youngest age at which a child should be baptized. This has no Scriptural foundation whatsoever. It may be a carry-over from the Jewish custom of adoption. The Word clearly states that baptism is for *all believers*, regardless of age or sex.

B Lord’s Supper.

“I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come. 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” (1st Corinthians 11:23-28).

- 1 *Origination.* From the above Scriptures little doubt is left as to who instituted the Lord’s Supper. There is no record of this ordinance being held *before* the Lord Jesus inaugurated it. We, as it were, take the bread and the cup from His own precious hands. The theory that Christ never lived is exploded by the Lord’s Supper. It is His, and His only.
- 2 *Obligation.* The words “this do” are a command of the Lord. This ordinance is for the entire Body of Christ.
- 3 *Participation.*
 - a *Who?* No one but a baptized child of God should participate in the Lord’s Supper. Those who sat with Him at the last supper had been baptized. Baptism is the symbol of the commencing of the new life, and the Lord’s Supper is a symbol of the sustenance of that life.
 - b *How often?* Some churches observe the Lord’s Supper every Sunday; some, once a month; others, four times a year; and still others, once a year; some never observe the Lord’s Supper. What is the Scriptural stipulation for this observance? “As often” (1st Corinthians 11:26): there is no set, rigid rule.
 - c *In What Manner?* Some believers are very confused concerning their fitness to partake of the Lord’s Supper after reading 1st Corinthians 11:27-29. They notice the word “unworthily,” and immediately they review their past mistakes,

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ever since they became a Christian, and fear that they shall be eating and drinking damnation to themselves if they partake. Let us point out that the word “unworthily” is an adverb, and modifies the word “drink,” which means to drink in an “unworthy manner.” As far as being worthy is concerned, which one of us can call himself worthy? No one! This has reference to the *act* of participation. The context will give a perfect explanation. In the early church love feasts were held; the rich brought their store of food and wine, while the converted slaves brought nothing. As the feast progressed, the rich believer, keeping his food and drink to himself, soon became drunk. The poor slave, of course, had nothing, and remained sober. The Lord’s Supper was observed at the conclusion of the feast. The drunken believer could not appreciate the Lord’s Supper. In his drunkenness, the cup of the Lord’s Supper meant nothing more to him than another drink of wine. He could not discern the Lord’s body and blood; thus, he drank it “unworthily.” This fact led to many untimely deaths in the Corinthian Church: “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1st Corinthians 11:30).

If the Christian feels unworthy, it is a good indication that he *is* worthy, and vice versa. The man who finds some personal quality in himself to make him worthy to partake of the Lord’s Supper had better stay away. The table is not spread for the righteous, but for the unrighteous, who are justified by faith.

- 4 **Constitution.** The elements of the Lord’s Supper are bread and fruit of the vine. The bread and the wine were unleavened, as they were used in the observance of the Passover, from which the Lord inaugurated the Lord’s Supper. A thorough understanding of the Passover meal will give the serious Bible student a complete understanding of which “portion” of the meal Jesus was eating when He instituted the Lord’s Supper. Very simply put, this was the “dessert” part of the meal.
- 5 **Interpretation.**
 - a **Transubstantiation.** This false interpretation is held by the Roman Catholic Church. It declares that by the consecration of the priest the natural state of the bread and wine cease and become the actual body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. They believe that when the Lord said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53), he meant the actual flesh and blood of Christ. Therefore, the Mass is that ritual which turns the bread and wine “into” the actual flesh and blood of Christ.
 - b **Consubstantiation.** The Lutherans and the Church of England believe this interpretation, which states that, while the bread remains bread, and the wine remains wine, the body and blood is present in a “*spiritual*” sense; the body and blood are present only at the moment when they are partaken of, and after being taken, cease to be the body and blood of Christ.
 - c **Symbolism.** This is the true interpretation, which states that the bread and wine are only symbols of Christ’s body and blood, which were offered upon Calvary’s cross for the remission of sins. “This do in *remembrance* of me”; it is observed in blessed memory, and that is where it ends.
- 6 **Limitation.** How long should the Church continue this observance? Till He comes again. What is our answer to the scoffer who jeers at the Second Coming, and who asks, “Where is the promise of His coming?” We point to the Lord’s Table and reply, “There is the promise of His coming.”

Ecclesiology

The Doctrine of the Church

7 Evaluation.

a *Its Value Doctrinally.*

(1) *The Person of Christ.*

- (a) *His Humanity.* His humanity is as real as His Deity. The symbols speak of His actual human body and blood, and it is most essential that it is human, as the atonement must be in the nature of that which sinned (“Christ died for *us*”).
- (b) *His Deity.* His Deity is expressed in the words “Lord’s Supper.” All titles of Deity are in this one word, “Lord.”

(2) *The Work of Christ.*

- (a) *His Death.* The elements of the Lord’s Supper portray this fact, for the body and blood are together in life, but separated in death.
- (b) *His Resurrection and Second Coming.* “Till I come” does not mean “till I come from the grave”, but “till I come from heaven.”

(3) *The Way of Salvation.*

- (a) *It Assumes Our Guilt and Helplessness.*
- (b) *It Emphasizes Substitution.* (“Broken for you”)
- (c) *It Reminds Us That Salvation Is Free.* (Given for you)
- (d) *It Declares the Gift of Salvation Must Be Accepted.* (Take, eat, drink)

b *Its Value Devotionally.*

(1) *We Come With Confession.*

(2) *We Come With Prayer.*

(3) *We Come With Consecration and Humility.*

(4) *We Come With Thanksgiving.*

(5) *The Whole Man Is Engaged.*

- (a) *Ears to Hear His Invitation.*
- (b) *Eyes to See Its Symbol.*
- (c) *Hands That Handle the Elements.*
- (d) *Mouth Which Eats the Elements.*
- (e) *Body Which Assimilates the Element - Becomes Part of Us.*

c *Its Value Practically.*

(1) *It Is a Means of Grace.*

(2) *It Is a Means of Testimony.*

(3) *It Is a Means of Strengthening Faith.*

(4) *It Is a Means to Promote Our Love Toward Him.*

(5) *It Is a Means to Promote Love Toward One Another.*

(6) *It Is a Means to Promote Fellowship.* This fellowship is one with another in Christ around the Lord’s Table, He being the center.

(7) *It is a Means to Stimulate Holiness.*

d *Its Value Prophetically.* If the Lord Jesus is not coming the second time, why celebrate the Lord’s Supper? *He is coming!* Remember, in answer to those who ask, “Where is the promise of His coming?”, we point to the Lord’s Supper.