

## **Biblical Theology**

### **Unit 7: Doctrine of the Church – Lesson 2: Nature of the Church I**

#### **Definition of the Church**

- Definition: Community of all true believers for all time.
    - Etymology: Greek word: Ekklesia
      - ek – called; kaleo – out
        - Group assembled/called out by God.
        - Assembly/group of people.
1. **God's vision for the church is foreshadowed in the Old Testament.**
    - **Isaiah 44:1-5** *For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams. This one will say, 'I am the Lord's,' another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, 'The Lord's,' and name himself by the name of Israel."*
    - **Ezekiel 32:22-29** - *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will deliver you from all your uncleanness.*
    - **Joel 2:28-29** - *I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.*
      - **Galatians 3:27-28** - *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*
  2. **God's vision for the church is announced and accomplished by Jesus.**
    - **Matthew 16:13-19** - *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...*
    - **Acts 1:8** - *you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*
  3. **God's vision for the church is realized by the Holy Spirit.**
    - **Acts 2:1-4** - *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*
    - **Acts 2:37-47** - *And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*
      - The church is the physical manifestation of Christ's life and ministry on earth in His physical absence.
  4. **God's vision for the church is consummated at the end of time.**
    - See metaphors in next lesson: Bride.

## Nature of the Church

### 1. **The true church visible yet invisible.**

- Visible:
  - **1 Corinthians 1:2** - *To the church of God that is in Corinth*
  - **1 Thessalonians 1:1** - *To the church of the Thessalonians*
- Invisible:
  - **2 Timothy 2:19** - *"The Lord knows those who are his,"*
  - **Acts 20:29-30** - *I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*
  - **Matthew 7:15** - *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*

### 2. **The true church is local yet universal.**

- Local Sense:
  - **Romans 16:5** - *Greet also the church in their house.*
  - **1 Corinthians 16:19** - *The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.*
- Regional Sense:
  - **Acts 9:31** - *So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.*
  - **Colossians 4:17** - *And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.*
- Universal (Catholic) Sense:
  - **Matthew 16:18** - *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*
  - **Acts 20:28** - *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*
  - **Ephesians 5:25-27** - *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

### 3. **The church has ecumenical and autonomous aspects.**

- Ecumenical:
  - Assemblies gathering on the bases of God's word express unity in councils, creeds, and doctrines.
- Autonomous:
  - Not all assemblies assimilate on the basis of governance and worship practices.

## Discussion Questions

1. Was Jesus the only one who was able to announce and accomplish the establishment of the church? Explain your answer?
2. How does the Holy Spirit bring about the realization of the church?
3. Define Ecumenical.