
Part 2 | Christ's Church

- Ecclesiology is the study of the church.
- Though the word *church* appears in the English Old Testament, it is a reference to an assembly of people gathered together for a like-minded purpose.
- Ecclesiology is therefore a New Testament doctrine. Only in the New Testament is the church called the *Body of Christ* and given a distinct program.

The Beginning of the Church

- A Historical Perspective
 - The Ancient Period –
 - The ancient period has little focus on the church because the issues at hand concerned the nature of God, man, and sin.
 - The development of a *Universal Church* came about during this period due to an emphasis on unity.
 - According to Earl Radmacher, there were three stages of development¹-
 - The development of a Bishop to whom fellow elders were obedient.
 - The development of an ecumenical denomination.
 - The development of Roman supremacy.
 - Three individuals with profound influence on the church during the ancient period:
 - Irenaeus – *Against Heresies*
 - Shifted the focus from the local church to the unity of the visible universal church.
 - Taught the succession of Bishops from the time of Christ (which led to the preeminence of the Bishop of Rome).
 - Cyprian – *On the Unity of the Church*
 - Taught the full authority of the Bishop of the church: rebellion against the Bishop was rebellion against God.
 - Taught that Bishops made up the totality of the church: if you were not under a Bishop, you were not in the church (and were not saved).
 - Augustine – *The City of God*
 - Stressed the unity of the church, as made up of the Bishops, thus further solidifying the monarchical role of Bishops and eventually the Bishop of Rome.
 - The Middle Ages –
 - There was virtually no development in the doctrine of ecclesiology (or other doctrines) during this time.
 - In practice, an almost universal acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome developed during this time.
 - The Reformation –
 - The Lutheran Contribution:
 - Luther insisted that one could be a believer outside of the Roman church.
 - Luther did little to advance a New Testament view of the church.
 - Luther's view of church being the Kingdom allowed state control of the church.

¹ Earl D. Radmacher, *What the Church Is All about* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), p. 50. This work is extremely helpful in its development of the history of the doctrine of the church.

- The Calvinistic Contribution:
 - Calvin viewed the church as 1) *Invisible*, including all the elect; 2) the *Church*, including all who profess Christ; 3) *Kingdom*, closely aligned the church with the state.
 - Calvin did not believe one could be saved *and* be outside the church's authority.
 - The Anglican Contribution:
 - *The Act of Supremacy* (1534) separated the Church of England from the Roman Church organizationally, but not theologically.
 - The Puritans stayed in the church, attempting reform from within, and eventually became the seedbed for *Presbyterianism*.
 - The Separatists removed themselves from the church, and became the seedbed for the *Congregational* movement.
 - The Anabaptist Contribution:
 - The Anabaptists did not want to reform the Roman system, they worked from outside that system to build Biblical New Testament churches.
 - The Anabaptists repudiated infant Baptism and state control of the church (two views which are intimately connected).
 - The Modern Period
 - The modern period has been characterized by the *ecumenical* movement, the desire to bring about a world church.
 - The movement began out of theological liberalism that de-emphasized (or rejected) doctrinal distinctives.
- The Universal Church
 - The Bible, at times, uses the word *church* in a way that is not in reference to any local, particular church (for example, Acts 20:28, 1 Cor. 15:9, Gal. 1:13).
 - This "church" is sometimes called *the Body of Christ*.
 - Entrance is by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13, Eph. 4:12).
 - Many evangelicals and most fundamentalists, while recognizing the reality of salvation outside the local church, do not recognize a Universal Church.
- The Local Church
 - The most common usage of the word *ekklesia* is limited to the local assembly of believers.
 - It appears that the local churches of the New Testament had a *membership*.
 - The number of converts was recorded (Acts 2:41, 4:4).
 - Special requirements for widows implies requirements for others as well (1 Tim. 5:9).
 - The fact that elders and deacons were chosen implies responsibility and accountability of membership (Acts 6:2-5, 20:7).
 - The teaching of church discipline implies a membership roll (1 Cor. 5:13).
 - The office of elder / bishop seems to require a membership roll (Heb. 13:7).
 - The churches had both elder/bishop/pastor (terms which are used interchangeably) and deacons, these two offices making up the ordained leadership of the church.
 - The churches seemed to observe two ordinances, water *baptism* and *the Lord's Supper*. Some evangelical churches also observe *foot washing* as an ordinance.
 - The local church exists to exalt the Savior, teach the Scriptures, and equip the believers, and evangelize the lost.
 - The church has a theological mandate, not a cultural mandate. It does not exist to *Christianize the culture*. It exists to magnify the Word – written and Living.

Coming in session 5: *major areas of difference among evangelicals.*