

Bible Doctrine

Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith

Lesson 42: The Nature and Marks of the Church

Chapter 26

October 22, 2023

I. The Nature of the Church.

A. Definitions.

1. Church: "The church is the community of all true believers for all time." Wayne Grudem
2. Invisible church: "The invisible church is the church as God sees it. Wayne Grudem
3. Visible church: "The visible church is the church as Christians on earth see it." Wayne Grudem

B. Metaphors for the church.

1. The church as a building.

1 Peter 2:4-5 - *Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 3:9-10 - *For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.*

2. The church as a body.

Romans 12:4-5 - *For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.*

1 Corinthians 12:27 - *Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.*

3. The church as a family.

Ephesians 1:4-6 - *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.*

Matthew 12:49-50 - *And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."*

4. The church as Christ's bride.

Revelation 19:6-7 - *And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! ⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."*

Revelation 21:2 - *Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

II. The Marks of the Church.

A. The importance of the “marks” throughout church history.

The time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century brought about the need to identify true churches—as opposed to the Roman Catholic Churches that dominated European culture.

Revelation 2:5 - *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.*

B. Reformed “marks” of the church.

1. Faithful preaching of the gospel of the word of God.

Acts 6:2-4 - *Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.”³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*

Acts 20:25-27 - *And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*

2 Timothy 4:2 - *Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*

2. True ordinances being issued biblically.

Matthew 28:18-20 - *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.*

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 - *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”²⁵ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”*

²⁶ *For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.*

3. Proper use of church discipline.

Matthew 18:15-18 - *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.*

¹⁸ *“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*

Galatians 6:1 - *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*

Titus 3:9-11 - *But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.¹⁰ Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition,¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.*