

Convent Avenue Baptist Church
Wednesday Bible Study 5/26/10
Pastor Jesse Williams

The Articles of Faith; What we believe...

Article XIII. A Gospel Church

Matthew 16:18, 18:17; Colossians 1:16-18; Acts 2:47, 12:1, 20:28-30
1 Corinthians 12:27-31; Ephesians 3:20-21, 5:23-32; 1 Timothy 3:1-16

This doctrinal teaching introduces us to the concept that the **church** is an intentional part of God's will for the spiritual growth and development of Christians; as well as for the spread of the Gospel throughout the whole world. The church is referred to by several other names in the bible such as; "*flock*", "*congregation*", "*assembly*", "*the way*", and "*body of Christ*". All of these names refer to the church that God established, and where Jesus Christ is the head.

The word "*church*" as it appears in the bible literally translates from the Greek word as "*the called-out assembly of people*". So, it is an important distinction to understand that when the bible talks about the church as God intended it, it does not refer to a building or a business as we sometimes categorize the church. "**Church**" means an assembly of people who have been called out of a worldly, ungodly way of life into a new life in relationship with God through Jesus Christ. A church is a congregation of people who have been baptized as believers in Jesus Christ, and choose to freely associate with each other in a covenant relationship based on our faith and a fellowship based on the principles of the Gospel and God's word.

An important point to understand about the church is that as Christians, God desires for us to grow and be nurtured in our faith in the context of meaningful **relationships** with other Christians. Christianity is a religion in which **relationships** are necessary if we are to truly be a Christian. We do not become the Christians that we are supposed to be in isolation away from other people. Although salvation experience is personal, we become more Christ-like as we interact with other people. The institution that God has created and designed to help us grow in our faith with meaningful relationships is the church! So, the church is different than any other organization or institution known to humanity that people may join. The church is not like a fraternity, sorority, non-profit, political party, social agency, club, society, or any other type of organization established by human beings on earth. The church was designed and established by God Himself, and Jesus Christ is the Head. In fact, the church is so special that the bible describes the church as being the "bride" of Christ and the "body" of Christ. No other organization on earth can claim such intimacy with God as the church can.

This is important to understand since we are living in post-modern times when people are beginning to question the relevancy and the need for the church. There are those who embrace the need for religion and spirituality, but resent the organized, institutionalized form of religion that the church represents. However, they fail to realize that the church was founded and established by God! Because of the presence of human beings, the church has its issues and problems to be sure. But the church is still an essential part of God's plan for helping His people become more like Him. Just as God is a God of relationship; Father-Son-Holy Ghost, so also we must be people who rely on relationships to be like God. We need each other! God has blessed us with a wonderful fellowship called the church!

As it relates to the church, it is important for us to note the following:

-The Meaning of the Church

God means for the church to be the fellowship and place where we live out our faith on a daily basis in relationships with each other and with God. The Church is a place of salvation, nurturing, encouragement, discipline, edification, healing, liberation and spiritual growth. All of these things are in Jesus Christ, and we are the body of Christ in the church. When the world sees the church, they should see Jesus Christ. The church exists as a living testimony in the world that God is real and that Jesus Christ is a living savior. The church is the place on earth where the bible governs all our actions, decisions, thoughts and deeds. In the church, the Kingdom of God and its principles are lived as a reality on earth even though we are surrounded by a world that does not believe in God. In order to do this, we must love each other, encourage each other and strengthen each other; and we do it in the context of the church!

-The Message of the Church

The message of the church is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That God took on the form of humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. That Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary, but rose from the dead on Resurrection Day. Our message is that God, through Jesus Christ has provided the way for humanity to have new life and everlasting life. It is a message of hope, healing, salvation, deliverance and love for all who have been beaten up and bruised by life in this ungodly world.

-The Make-up of the Church

As stated in the article, the church consists of baptized believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Among the congregation, there are two Biblical offices that God intended; Pastor(Bishop) and Deacon. These are the only two Biblical offices of the church. The Pastor is also referred to as Bishop, Minister, Elder or Apostle in the Bible. These two offices are the only two that scripture describes as ordained to a particular service. Pastor/Bishop means overseer or one who leads the flock; while Deacon means servant. There are other offices and titles in the church that are man-made, but these two were established scripturally in the early church.

-The Mission of the Church

The mission of the church is expressed in Matthew 28:19-20, otherwise known as the Great Commission. We are to carry the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ into all the world. We are to teach people and baptize people. We are to tell people about the salvation that is available through Jesus Christ. That is our first, foundational, main message. That message then has implications for us as a church. Because of that message, we minister and serve humanity and their needs, so we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the bereaved, counsel the lost, advocate for the downtrodden and poor, etc... Our mission is a global mission, so we must understand ourselves as a part of something much bigger than our local church. We are a part of the *Church Universal*, and as such we must do our part in cooperation with all of God's local churches. As a part of the *Church Universal*, we work toward our mission of making the Kingdom of God a living reality here on earth.

