

The Church:

THE CHURCH:

The Church began at Pentecost (Acts 2) and is therefore distinct from the nation of Israel (Acts 3:12; 4:8, 10; 5:21, 31, 35; 21:19; 1 Corinthians 10:32). The Church, the Bride of Christ, is the universal body of Christ made up of every believer who has been baptized into His body since the day of Pentecost until the rapture of the Church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; Colossians 1:18, 24). Jesus Christ is the Founder, Chief Cornerstone and Head of the Church.

We teach that the church is a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5). We teach that these leaders lead as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22), having His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19,20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19,20; Titus 1:10-16).

We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end He gives the church spiritual gifts.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

Spiritual gifts are God given abilities for service. The source of spiritual gifts is the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11). Every believer has spiritual gifts but not all spiritual gifts (1 Peter 4:10). We teach that God is sovereign in His distribution of all gifts, and that he gives the gifts, which are sufficient for the perfecting of the saints today. However, gifts such as speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles gradually ceased as the New Testament Scriptures were completed and their authority became established (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:3,4).

THE LOCAL CHURCH:

The local church is an organized group of believers who gather together on a regular basis in a local area under proper leadership in keeping with the teachings of the New Testament. We teach the establishment and continuance of such churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament (Acts 14:27; 20:17,28-32; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11). We teach the autonomy of the local church under God, free of any external human authority or control, free from the interference of any hierarchy of individual or organizations (Acts 13:1-4; 15:19-31; 20:28; Romans 16:1-5; 1 Corinthians 3:9,16; 5:4-7,13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

ORDINANCES:

We teach that the Christian should observe the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, which are **(1)** baptism of believers by triune immersion (Matthew 28:19) and **(2)** the three-fold communion service, consisting of the washing of saints' feet (John 13:1-17), the Love Feast (1 Corinthians 11:20-22; Jude 12), and the communion of the bread and cup (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).