

Lead 360 – Christian Theology  
Session IV, Part I – Belief in the Church (Ecclesiology)

I. Introduction

1. Why the church is important:
  - (1) Its relationship to Christ – it belongs to Him.
  - (2) The Holy Spirit constitutes and empowers the church.
  - (3) The local church is God’s chief means of reaching this world for Christ.
2. A comparison of the church to Noah’s ark
3. There were no “churchless Christians” that we can find in the N.T.

II. Nature and Purpose of the Church

1. Church as God’s covenant people: “the called out” ones to be on mission with God in covenant with Him and fellow members. “Ekklesia” is the N.T. Greek word for church.
2. Images of the church in the N.T. – notice the trinitarian connections
  - (1) The people (or nation) of God
  - (2) Body of Christ with Him as the head
  - (3) The fellowship (or temple) of the Holy Spirit
3. Characteristics (marks) of the N.T. church
  - (1) Roman Catholic definition: one, holy, apostolic, catholic (universal)
  - (2) Protestant reformers: “where the Word of God is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly observed”
  - (3) Anabaptist definition: where voluntary Christian believers gather, are baptized, and keep church and state separate.
4. Relationship of the church to the Kingdom of God
  - (1) Closely related because the Kingdom produces the church which becomes the sign of the Kingdom
  - (2) But church and Kingdom are not the same; the Kingdom is broader than the church; it is God’s rule over all, including the church.

III. Mission of the N.T. Church

1. Worship is hugely important for the church to have vision and power.
2. Spiritual edification: weeping and rejoicing together.
3. Evangelism, missions and ministry are interrelated.

IV. Participation in a N.T. Church

1. Membership is biblical and necessary for mutual accountability in a congregation.
2. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper: not just “mere” symbols. While they do not save us, they are powerful pictures AND worship experiences.
  - (1) Baptism is first: as new Christians are immersed in water, they act out the salvation drama of death to an old way of life, union with Christ, and a new life in him. Rom. 6:3-11 is an important passage which helps us understand the meaning. *Biblical* baptism is necessary only once.
  - (2) The Lord’s Supper is repeated often enough to help Christians commemorate the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
  - (3) Both acts were authorized by Jesus and are dramatic reminders that He and He alone saves us.
3. Organization:
  - (1) Decision-making: is by the congregation on most matters which affect the entire congregation.
  - (2) Interdependence of local churches enables them to accomplish together what none can do alone.
  - (3) Church leadership: while the word “office” is not in the N.T., leadership functions are. Baptists have two key leadership positions/functions: pastors and deacons. Humility and servanthood which follow the pattern of our Lord are key to faithful service.