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**THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH**

**Introduction:** We concluded our last doctrinal study concerning the devil and his desire to defeat the work of God in the world, even as Paul warned believers of “the wiles of the devil”, and the “fiery darts of the wicked” (Eph. 6:11, 16) those deadly D’s. Satan has opposed the work of God and those who work the works of God from the very beginning of man in the garden. Historically we view his works in the Old Testament against God’s greatest creation, man. There was Adam & Eve and their descendants, there was Noah and his family, Abraham, and ultimately the whole host of Israel, the Hebrews, God’s chosen people, and of course the multitudes that made up the world.

The conflict would change with the advent of Christ and a new covenant, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_1, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_2 and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_3 of \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_4, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_5, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_6, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_7, the price of redemption and His \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_8 from the dead followed by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_9 into Heaven victorious over death, hell and the grave. Each of these points of victory were places of demonic attack against Christ and those who by faith became His followers, “A peculiar people”. Those were appointed to be in likeness the body of Christ, in assembly. A visible manifestation of Christ in this present world.

The war began with attacks against \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_10 (truth – God’s word). Against the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_11, His godhead, the truth of the Triune godhead, of one God! Strong faith and Spirit filled preaching in the first centuries prevailed, and Satan’s attempts to defeat the believers were thwarted.

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Records of church history reveal another great victory against these works when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_12 emerged and introduced false doctrines of religion. These were confronted by the doctrine of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_13 and a reformation toward one truth, the Holy Scripture. The attack against \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_14 continues to this day, but a full history holds record of the infallible, inerrant, inspired and preserved Word of God as witnessed in our 1611 authorized English Bible. The battle to keep the church from fulfilling its Great Commission has come in many ways, but the great \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_15 of the 18th and 19th centuries prevailed. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_16 could not be suppressed no matter how Satan oppressed them even in the twenty and twenty first centuries. In some points, weakened by compromise and worldly influence, the believers who together are the church of the New Testament continue to carry out the Great commission, and confront satanic attempts to defeat it. Knowing that his time is short the devil desires to bring about one final sure and swift defeat, the destruction of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_17. Such a defeat would thwart all of the centuries of sacrifice and service by the Saints of God and bring certain destruction to the cause of Christ. The churches of Christ must prevail, the validity of all of God’s Word is established “verbally and visually” upon the absolute integrity of the very promises of God, provided to His church.

This last doctrinal theme regarding the historic truths of our faith is the longest and most defined and descriptive of all of our doctrinal themes. The current conditions of this “post church” compromising, convenient, contemporary, casual, culture demands a Biblical analysis, and scriptural approach to confirming a church culture not conclusive to worldly fashion but conformed to the true nature of Christ.

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“…And upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Mt. 16:18)

We maintain from our previous chapter (II Cor. 2:11) “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Let’s begin.

1. **THE MEANING OF THE WORD “CHURCH”:** From the Greek New Testament books the word translated – scripturally “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_18” originates in the word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_19/verb, compound EK = out, and KALEO, a call or summon. \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_20, recognized, authorized.

In the O.T. Hebrew the word is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_21, used over 100 times, often translated (congregation, company, assembly, or gathering) it may be for the purpose…

Evil counsel (Gen. 49:6; Ps. 26:4) Civil affairs (I Kings 12:3, 7) warfare (Num. 22:4; Judges 20:2) religious worship (II Chron. 20:5). **note:** or a gathering of angels (Ps. 89:5) “the whole assembly…” host.

In the secular sense the Greek “EKKLESIA” is to the assembly or meeting, not to those who comprise the assembly or meet together. The “assembly” or EKKLESIA could have many purposes, or even a riotous mob (Acts 19:32). What they met for or who met was not the focus in the secular mind.

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The word took on a new meaning with “the assembly of believers,” the emphasis was on 1. \_\_\_\_22 assembled, 2. \_\_\_\_23 assembled, 3. \_\_\_\_\_24 assembled and would take on a more specific identify, and 4. \_\_\_\_\_\_25 assembled. Designating the assembly of believers 114 times (people of God) **note: 5** exceptions (Acts 7:38, 19:32, 39, 41; Heb. 2:12)…

Many names and titles describe and even define God’s people in the New Testament, individually and corporately. The way, believers, disciples, brethren, the followers of Christ, but EKKLESIA is a descriptive term for corporately associating the individual to a greater body of assembly united.

1. **THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH:** There are numerous opinions of when and where the “church” began and each of them is based on the definition of what the “church” is, where it is, and thus when it is according to scripture and historical observation. Let’s consider…
2. It began with \_\_\_\_\_\_26 (Gen. 3). The prophesy of Satan/serpent and the seed of the woman received by Adam constitutes the idea of the full length of the church from the Old Testament to the New Testament as the model by which God would fulfill His purpose of redemption. This is more of an academic position and assumes they possessed more knowledge than is presented in their introduction. Looking back, insights can be gained as experience encounters – revelation (Hindsight) and foresight) but nothing indicates an intricate understanding of what the church is or what it does.

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1. It began with Abraham (Gen. 12). This would be adopted by covenant theologians who believe the Nation of Israel functions in the Old Testament as God’s church, even as the church in the New Testament functions as God’s Israel in the New Testament.
2. It began with John the Baptist (Mt. 3). The administration of baptism began with John in the wilderness and was ordained of the churches (ordinance) by God as instituted by Jesus and observed by His disciples. (Mt. 28:19) the act of baptism thus initiates the church, rather than the church instituting baptism.
3. It began with Christ: 4 proposed examples are presented.
4. The call of the twelve apostles (Mt. 10). It is necessary to establish the existence of something that tangibly identifies itself as the church historically. The meeting of the 12 with Christ in prayer, He is the head, they were the body, they met in a physical, visible location, they had a treasurer – Judas, they received instruction to do Christ’s will and they availed themselves to do His work.
5. The confession of Peter (Mt. 16). The account of Christ confirming what they had presented before them constituted the beginning of the church, as a functioning body of beliefs.

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1. The last supper/upper room (Mt. 26; Mk. 14; Lk 22; Jn. 13). Here Christ instituted the second ordinance – communion, as with baptism it is presented as initiating the church; however, it is also proposed it is added to the existing church already a functioning body.
2. The first resurrection Sunday evening service (Jn. 20:21, 22). The final piece of the proposed church/the person and power of the Holy Spirit as promised is now in place. This final step indicates the conclusion of something consummated previously. The church is initiated by the Lord Jesus Christ (His church) and completed as such, revealing the intended plan and purpose of the church.
3. It began at Pentecost (Acts 2). The promise of the Holy Spirit’s power and manifest presence were realized when the assembly of born again baptized believer gathered tougher to deliver the message to a mixed multitude (ministry). The functioning body was already present.
4. It began with Paul the Apostle (Acts 9). This position places the emphasis on Paul’s ministry as primary to promoting the New Testament church because he was its most powerful preacher. It is proposed the church began with Paul at his conversion (Acts 9). A second theory is the assembly at Jerusalem (even though they were referred to as a church) was really not one, but rather a group of mainly Jewish believers operating as a modified Old Testament entity. In (Acts 13) Paul begins his ministry of establishing 100 percent Christian local churches.

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During Paul’s first Roman imprisonment he wrote Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians along with Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus compose the letters to the New Testament churches to provide instruction and these constitute the churches origin (Acts 28).

**NOTE**: Godly and well qualified theologians have debated these views presented without a confirmed conclusion. It is our position that the New Testament church could not have existed before Christ since it is “His Church” and He alone initiated it. The church was first presented in concept, that is what the church will be, what it will do, who, and where the church is. Elements of the churches identify are added from Christ’s first announcing His coming and His calling of the Apostles through His ascension, final instructions and fulfilled revelations. The church is a fully functioning body, a living organism, instituted by Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and entrusted to God the Father’s plan and purpose.