

## BASIC BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

### 14. THE CHURCH

**Definition:** The word “Church” has two meanings:

1. The house of the Lord, set apart for worship.
2. The people of the Lord, called apart for His service.

#### **Who forms the CHURCH of Jesus Christ?**

The CHURCH of Jesus Christ is made up of all those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. (Revelation 5:9)

It is the spiritual family of God, the Christian fellowship created by the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus. While this body of believers is **in** the world, it is not **of** the world. “For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).

The destination of the Church is the home in Heaven, the celestial city, the new Jerusalem. The day will come when the Church will appear as one congregation – the people of God, to live with Him for ever and ever.

#### **What are the Marks of the Church?**

1. Its members are in “Christ”, born again, believers and followers of Jesus Christ.
2. In its congregation, the Word is faithfully proclaimed and His commandments obeyed.
3. The Sacraments are administered in accordance with His command.
4. Corporate worship is observed regularly on the Lord’s Day, and on other occasions, as a testimony to all, and for the spiritual nourishment of the members.
5. Its members proclaim the Gospel of Salvation in fulfilment of our Lord’s “Great Commission” - to be His witness unto the uttermost part of the earth.

#### **The beginnings of the New Testament Church**

After our risen Lord ascended to Heaven, the disciples waited in Jerusalem for the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit. This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. On that day, as they were assembled together, the Holy Spirit from Heaven fell upon them in power and they spoke in tongues proclaiming the Gospel of Salvation in different foreign languages. Great crowds gathered to witness the incredible phenomenon.

Peter then standing up with the rest of the disciples witnessed to the saving grace of Jesus Christ whereupon 3,000 believed and were baptized. Thus began the New Testament Church. “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

### **The Nature of the Church**

While all believers together form the “Universal Church” each gathering of believers constitutes the “Local Church”. The vital link between the two is the relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Church is also referred to as God’s building, flock, vineyard, temple, household and people. The Church is established by God. The Head of the Church is Jesus Christ. Through the witness of the Church, God’s salvation and grace is offered to all men. Here the risen Lord encounters men, calls them unto Himself, out of darkness into light, out of enmity to peace with God.

The Church is likened to the Bride, a chaste Virgin. Christ is the Heavenly Bridegroom. She is to be kept pure and spotless, without blemish for her Husband.

“For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church ... Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it ... That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:23, 25, 27).

### **The Ministry of the Church**

The one essential ministry of the Church is service to her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is our High Priest, interceding on our behalf before God the Father. Through Him, we His children have access to the throne of grace.

All believers, in their turn, are called to be priests, a people for God’s own possession. (1 Peter 2:9; 5:2, 3).

### **The Mission of the Church**

1. To establish and maintain a witness through public corporate worship.
2. To call men to the Saviour by our testimony and witness.
3. To nurture and feed and care for the flock of God.
4. To uphold and defend the faith of the Gospel.
5. To hasten unto the day of Jesus Christ, when He shall return in the clouds in the air.

## **CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

There are three main forms of Church Government, namely, Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational.

In the **Episcopal** system, the principal officer is the Bishop who is appointed by a higher authority. The congregation is ruled by someone in whose appointment they have no part. In the **Presbyterian** system there is a governing body of Elders who are elected by the congregation. It is the closest to the New Testament pattern of Church Government. In the **Congregational** system the chief burden of government is in the hands of the Congregation, Christ Himself being recognized as the Head of the Church.

## **THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

The Presbyterian Church, its doctrines and form of government, took its origin from the great reformers John Calvin (France) and John Knox (Scotland). Our own Presbyterian heritage has these historical links:

### **Bible-Presbyterian Church of Singapore & Malaysia**

Say Mia Tng (Life Church)  
Chinese Presbyterian Church;  
Prinsep Street

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Swatow Teochew Presbyterian Church  
founded by the English Presbyterian  
Mission of England through the  
ministry of William Burns (1856)

|

John Knox (Scotland)

|

John Calvin (France)

## **DOCTRINAL STANDARD**

Our doctrinal standard is founded on the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (Larger and Shorter). The Westminster Confession of Faith was the work of English theologians (1643-1669) commissioned by Parliament, and enshrined for the benefit of all posterity in classic English Language.

## **DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

The doctrine of this Church shall be in accordance with that system commonly called “The Reformed Faith”, as expressed in the Confession of Faith, together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms which Confession and Catechisms are similar to those set forth by the historic Westminster Assembly.

In abbreviated form the chief tenets of the doctrine of this Church, apart from the Apostles' Creed, shall be as follows:

- a. We believe in the divine, verbal, and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and, as the Word of God, the supreme and final authority in faith and life.
- b. We believe in one God existing in three co-equal and co-eternal Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- c. We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and is true God and true Man.
- d. We believe that man was created in the image of God, but sinned through the Fall of Adam, thereby incurring not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God: and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature and become sinners in thought, word, and deed.
- e. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died an expiatory death as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who repent of their sins and believe in Him are justified before God on the ground of His shed blood.
- f. We believe in the bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His ascension into Heaven, and in His exaltation at the right hand of God, where He intercedes for us as our High Priest and Advocate.
- g. We believe in the personal, visible and pre-millennial return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to judge this world and bring peace to the nations.
- h. We believe that salvation is by grace through faith, not by works, and that all who repent and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour are born again by the Holy Spirit and thereby become the children of God.
- i. We believe that Christ instituted the sacrament of Baptism for believers and their children and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which sacrament shall be observed by His Church till He comes.
- j. We believe in the eternal security, bodily resurrection, and eternal blessedness of the saved and in the bodily resurrection and eternal conscious punishment of the lost; and
- k. We believe in the real, spiritual unity in Christ of all redeemed by His precious blood and the necessity of maintaining the purity of the Church in doctrine and life according to the Word of God.

#### **WHY "BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN"?**

The word "BIBLE" is pre-fixed to PRESBYTERIAN to denote that our Church is a Bible-believing and Bible-honouring Church. It first came to be used in this fashion in America because of the great fundamentalist-modernist controversy.

Our Church maintains and defends the fundamentalist position in our uncompromising stand on the Word of God. We hold that the Holy Scriptures **are** God's Word, inerrant and infallible and the supreme authority in faith and practice.

We also endeavour to “earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3) in an age of increasing apostasy and departure from the fundamentals of the historic Christian faith.

We maintain close spiritual links with **all** Bible-believing Christians regardless of denominational boundaries. However, we refrain from any form of involvement or association with individuals or churches or organizations which are known to be linked with the apostasy, the unfaithful “Christian” bodies.

Our Bible-Presbyterian Church, from the beginning of its founding in 1950, has been part of the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement (the International Council of Christian Churches). This Movement is a world-wide fellowship of Bible-believing fundamentalist Christians and Churches and Allied bodies who take an uncompromising separated stand for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.