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Section: Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology)

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Date Taught: February 3, 2021

**HANDOUT NOTES**

**Q100.** **What is the universal Church?**

The universal Church is all the members of the body of Christ, made up of people from all times and around the world. It is all who are called out of darkness, regenerated, and set apart by God’s saving grace. It is all the genuine believers in Jesus.

* **Introduction**

**The universal Church** can be referred to as: the saints, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, His people, the called-out ones, God’s saved elect, and God’s saved chosen ones.

The local church is something we as believers must be committed to. A local church is the specific body where we serve, grow, and do life together. It’s a local gathering of committed people who are professing faith in Christ.

* **The Universal Church Is All the Members of the Body of Christ**

**1689 Confession of Faith:** “The catholic—that means, “universal”—church may be called invisible with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace. It consists of the full number of the elect who have been, are, or will be gathered into one under Christ her head. The church is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

**Ephesians 4:15-16** Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

If you have been saved by the grace of our Lord, then you are in Christ and are a part of the body of Christ the universal church!

**Galatians 3:26-29** for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

The universal Church is ***one*** in how it was saved and ***one*** in whom it belongs to.

God saves all His chosen people and your race or gender or social status has nothing to do with God’s sovereign choice.

**Romans 12:2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

**Jeremiah 17:9** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

**1 Corinthians 12:12-27** For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one

another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

* **The Universal Church Is Made up of People from All Around the World**

**John 10:16** “And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”

The universal Church is Christ’s body, and together we are one in Christ, even though we come from all over the world.

**Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**2 Peter 3:1-10** This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

**Matthew 24:31** “And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

* **The Universal Church Is All Who Are Called Out of Darkness, Regenerated, and Set Apart by God’s Saving Grace—All the Genuine Believers in Jesus.**

The universal Church is made up of **only** those actually chosen by God, those Jesus truly died for, those the Holy Spirit definitely redeems. Only *true Christians* make up the universal Church.

**1 Peter 2:9-10** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

**John 3:29** “The one who has the bride is the bridegroom ...”

**Ephesians 5:25** ... Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

**1689 Confession of Faith:** “All people throughout the world who profess the faith of the gospel and obedience to God through Christ in keeping with the gospel are and may be called visible saints, as long as they do not destroy their own profession by any foundational errors or unholy living. All local congregations ought to be made up of these. The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error. Some have degenerated so much that they have ceased to be churches of Christ and have become synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, Christ always has had and will have in this world to the very end a kingdom of those who believe in him and profess his name.”

If we fellow believers are all a part of one body in Christ and called His bride, then it follows that we must treat each other with the same respect you would treat God’s very bride.

We are called as saved sinners to have a particular affection for the bride of Christ and a particular love toward them.