

Doctrine of the Church

1. The true “catholic” church is the universal assembly of all the people of God from every tongue, and tribe, and denomination, for the gospel has gone to the ends of the earth.

- *Revelation 14:6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

2. The Apostle’s Creed affirms faith in the “catholic” church in its Trinitarian formula giving honor to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. AMEN.”

3. While Rome places great value of having a visible expression of the universal church, the true church is also universal, but consists of those who are born again.

4. What is of vital importance is that each member within the church be apostolic in nature. True Christians are built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

- *Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*

5. When Christ established the church and gave gifts to the church, the first gift He gave was the gift of apostles who became the primary authority of the church.

6. The word apostle (apostolos), literally means, “one who is sent from.” An apostle was an envoy, a representative, or a spokesperson sent from a king, a general, or someone in high authority.

7. An apostle was significantly different from a disciple of Christ. Initially all apostles, with the exception of Paul, were first disciples of Christ. Some of the disciples (matheteuo, math-ayt-yoo’-o, pupil, student) of Jesus became apostles, but not all of His disciples became an apostle. Jesus had many disciples, but few apostles.

- *Luke 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.*
8. The number of apostles are limited to the original twelve disciples, plus Paul. This is significant, because in the first century, and today, individuals, and groups, such as the Gnostics and Mormons, have tried to claim apostolic authority for themselves.
 9. The Roman Catholic Church is guilty of claiming apostolic authority for herself in order to give authenticity to the pope.
 10. Christ is the Original Apostle for He is the Supreme Apostle who has been sent by the Father to speak with authority for the Father.
 - *John 5:23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*
 - *John 5:37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. 38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.*
 11. The Pharisees and scribes wanted to ignore Jesus, and honor God. Jesus said that could not be done. If the people embraced Moses, they had to honor Him, for He was greater than Abraham, and greater than Moses.
 - *John 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*
 - *Hebrews 3:3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.*
 12. In the third century, when combating the enemies of the church, Irenaeus argued in his work, *Against Heresies* (c. AD 175-178) that to reject Jesus is to reject the apostles. To reject the apostles is to reject the One who commissioned them. But to reject the One who commissioned the apostles, and Christ, is to reject God. There is a line of authority, from God, to Christ, to the apostles.
 13. In the 21st century, the Feminist have attacked with hatred, the doctrine of apostolic authority. In like manner, so have the Higher Critics who pretend allegiance to Christ, while they reject the authority of Scripture. To attack the foundation of the church, is to destroy the church.
 - *Psalms 11:3 If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*
 14. The question arises: “What is the true church?” Is the Roman Catholic Church the true church? Is the Reformed Church the true church? Is the Greek Orthodox Church the true church? The answer is this: “That is the wrong question to ask.”

15. What every Christian should ask of the local Christian assembly is this question. “Is this a true church?” A true church, a true local assembly will have nonnegotiable and distinct characteristics.

- A true church will preach the whole gospel. *1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.*
- A true church will administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
- A true church will administer discipline, which requires some form of government. The church has responsibility for pastoral care.

16. There are other marks of a true church.

- A true church will be characterized by a commitment to the Lordship of Christ, and keeping His commandments. *John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.*
- A true church will be characterized by a community of baptized believers. *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*
- A true church will be characterized by a commitment to one Book, the Bible, in all matters of faith and practice. *2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*
- A true church will be characterized by apostolic doctrine and authority. *Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*