

I. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THINGS REGARDING THE CHURCH

There are several good reasons why believers should study the doctrines concerning the church and come to sound Biblical conclusions regarding it.

First of all, the church is the only God-ordained institution through which God's people are called upon to serve Him in this dispensation. While many may be delinquent or derelict concerning this duty, it doesn't alter this fact. The Scriptures will also substantiate the fact that the church has been given a two-fold commission from the Lord to win the lost to Christ and to disciple them in the things of the Lord (Matt. 28:19,20).

Secondly, unless people have a proper Biblical understanding of what the church is and what it is commissioned to do, it will lead them to espouse erroneous purposes for its existence. And this then will lead them to either wrong or secondary practices and relationships with others in this world. Two examples of this truth can be seen in the Salvation Army organization and the YMCA.

A third reason to study church doctrine relates then to philosophy of ministry or how its two-fold commission is to be carried out. The Scriptures set forth specific instructions as to "what" the church is supposed to be engaged in and "how" it is to fulfill its mission. Oftentimes today, personal talents are confused with spiritual gifts and all kinds of methods are employed which vacillate between the ridiculous and what is Scripturally right. To say the least pragmatism is the order of the day and anything which seems to produce results is utilized. There are gospel-rock music concerts, power-team demonstrations, martial arts and the list goes on! What is often employed is rightly named "para-church ministries" and has nothing to do with the local church. The question is - does anything go or should we follow Biblical mandates?

Finally, the view that one takes regarding the church will directly affect his eschatological views. For example, some espouse the covenant theology view that Israel (God's people in the Old Testament) becomes the church (God's people in the New Testament). This view poses a big problem for believers regarding the rapture of the church and the tribulation period after the rapture. The Scriptures will substantiate however that God has three distinct programs with the Jews, the Gentiles, and the church of God (I Cor. 10:32). These must be viewed separately and must not be confused as some erroneously do.

A study therefore of church doctrine will no doubt benefit every believer and help him to stay moored to Biblical truths and steer him on the right track spiritually.