Theology Exam #23
Q: Provide a biblical description of the church.
Memory Verse: Colossians 1:28

Q: What is the church?

"The 'church' in Scripture is not a building, a denomination, or an activity – it is a group of people. This is true of both the universal church, which is the group of people throughout the world who believe in Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 525-27), and also the local church, which is the group of people who meet together in a particular location for worship (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 1:2).[1]

1. **A universal living ORGANISM, not simply an ORGANIZATION**[2] (Eph. 4:7-16, 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Heb. 13:17; Col. 2:19)
   a. ORGANIZATION - an organized body of people with a particular purpose
   b. ORGANISM - a whole with interdependent parts
2. **The UNIVERSAL Church – The blood-bought BELIEVERS throughout all time** (Acts 20:28; Eph. 2:11-3:6, Eph. 3:1-6, 5:32).
   a. NOT a building, a denomination, or an activity.[3]
   b. "the CALLED out ones." (Eph. 1:4-6)
   c. The treasured creation and possession of our TRIUNE God:[4]
      i. God the FATHER
         1. Sovereign election before foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4-5)
         2. Sacrificed His Son to redeem it (1 John 4:14; John 3:16; Acts. 20:28)
         3. Continued fellowship with the Church (1 John 1:3)
         4. Brings Him glory (Eph. 3:21)
      ii. God the SON
         1. Died to unite the Church to Himself (Eph. 5:25; John 10:11-16)
         2. Functions as the Head of the Church (Eph. 5:23; 4:12; 1 Cor. 12:12)
         3. Holds the Church together (Col. 1:15-20)
         4. Present in fulfilling the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20)
      iii. God the Holy SPIRIT
         1. Established the Church (Acts. 2:1-4, 10:44-48)
         2. Brings each member into the body through regeneration and gifts them to serve the body (John 3:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 13)
         3. Guarantees eventual glorification (Eph. 1:13-14)

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[1] Mack & Swavely, *Life in the Father's House* (P&R, 2006), 11.
[2] General outline adapted from Track 5 of Faith Biblical Counseling Training Conference, http://www.faithlafayette.org.
[3] Mack & Swavely, *Life in the Father's House* (P&R, 2006), 11.
[4] Outline adapted from Mack & Swavely, *Life in the Father's House* (P&R, 2006), 24-26

4. Empowers and illumines believers (John 14: 16-17, 26; 16:13)

"The entire Godhead is deeply and intimately involved in the origin and operation of the church." Mack & Swavely

d. "The church is the community of all true believers for all time."[5]

e. The BODY of Christ (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22, 4:15)

f. The BRIDE of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-32; Rev. 19:7-8)

g. The DWELLING place of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4)

h. The INSTITUTION for growth in Godliness (Col. 1:24-29)

i. The DEAD and alive in Christ (1 Thes. 4:13-18)

j. The COMMISSIONED of Christ (Mt. 28:18-20)

k. The PERSECUTED of this age (1 Cor. 17:7; 1 Pet. 4:7; Mt. 5:10-11)

3. LOCAL fellowships (1 Th. 1:1; Rom. 16:16; Acts 2:42-27)

a. "the HOUSEHOLD of God" (1 Tim. 3:15; Gal. 6:10)

b. Gatherings of BAPTIZED believers (Acts 2:41)

c. Connected by a common faith and fellowship in the GOSPEL (Act. 2:41-47)

d. ORGANIZED with gifted leadership (Eph. 4:1, 8-12; Titus 1:5; Phil. 1:1; Acts 2:42, 14:23, 27 & 6:3-5; 1 Th. 5:12; 1 Pt. 5:1-2a)

4.

a. Participants of the Lord's ORDINANCES (Acts 2:41-42; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)

b. Those being SANCTIFIED by the Word of God (John 17:17; Phil. 2:12-13; Heb. 12:2)

c. AMBASSADORS of the Lord Jesus Christ proclaiming the GOSPEL (2 Cor. 5:20; 1 Pt. 2:9-12; Phil. 1:12-14; Mt. 5:14-16, 28:19-20)

"Believers compose one priesthood, one nation, one race, one temple, one plant, one flock, one family, and one body. We have all been made one spiritually, and we belong together in communion, living out that oneness in local churches."[6] John MacArthur

Key Resources:

Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, Chs. 19-22.
Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, rev. ed. (Moody, 2008), 359-382.
Mack and Swavely, Life in the Father's House, rev. ed (P&R, 2006), 9-52.
Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Zondervan, 1994), Chs 44-48.
Health Lambert, A Theology of Biblical Counseling (Zondervan, 2016), Ch. 11.

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[5] Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids: 1994), 853.
[6] Mack & Swavely, *Life in the Father's House* (P&R, 2006), 9-10.