

## *Essential Truth*

### **1. The Apostles' Doctrine**

**Summer Bible Studies  
Stark Road Gospel Hall  
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#### **1. The Formation of the First Local Assembly**

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers (Acts 2:42)*

**a. Two primary requirements:**

- i. The operation of the Holy Spirit
- ii. The preaching of the word

**b. Three individual, one-time actions:**

- i. Reception of the word
- ii. Baptism
- iii. Addition to the assembly

**c. Four collective, continuous, "steadfast" practices:**

- i. The apostles' doctrine
- ii. The fellowship
- iii. The breaking of bread
- iv. The prayers

#### **2. Doctrine, or Teaching (didachē)**

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

- a. The Apostles' doctrine is the teaching of the Apostles, which they received from the Lord Jesus directly (e.g. 1 Th 3:15), or through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Jh 16:12-14; 2 Tm 3:10).
- b. Although the disciples failed to understand much of what the Lord taught them when He was on earth, the Holy Spirit later brought them to an inerrant and accurate understanding of the Lord and His work, and they recorded it in the books of the NT (2 Pt 1:20-1). "He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (Jh 14:26).
- c. Before the Bible was completed, God communicated truth directly to the apostles and others who were gifted with "the word of wisdom" or "the word of knowledge (1 Cr 12:8). The apostles communicated "faithful sayings" (1 Tm 1:15; 4:9; 2 Tm 2:11; Tt 3:8), and "confessions" (1 Tm 3:16).
- d. OT principles still apply also. Peter writes, "that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior" (2 Pt 3:1-2).

### 3. The NT is a completed volume delivered once-for-all to the saints.

*Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).*

- a. NT doctrine is not a merely a guideline, or a starting point, but the full and final revelation for the entire age. The Holy Spirit commends the Bereans, because they “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Ac 17:11).
- b. Scripture is complete, sufficient, and finished; therefore it is fixed for all time. Nothing is to be added to or deleted from the body of the inspired Word (Dt 4:2; 12:32; Pr 30:6; Rv 22:18-9). Believers are now responsible to study the Word (2 Tm 2:15), preach the Word (2 Tm 4:2), and fight for its preservation (Jd 3).
- c. “The Faith” is the whole body of revealed truth contained in the Bible (cf Gl 1:23; Ep 4:5,13; Ph 1:27; 1 Tm 4:1). The Lord expects us to know sound doctrine (Ep 4:14; Cl 3:16; 1 Pt 2:2; 1 Jh 2:12-4), to be discerning in sorting truth from error (1 Th 5:20-2), and to be willing to confront and attack error (2 Cr 10:3-5; Ph 1:17, 27; 1 Tm 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tm 1:13; 4:7-8; Tt 1:13).

### 4. The NT is a unity: Essential truth was established by Christ, practiced in Acts, and taught in Epistles.

*When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into the whole truth (John 16:17)*

*I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel (didachē) of God (Acts 2:27)*

*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandment of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37).*

- a. The Great Commission. Mark records that the Lord Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” Thus the gospel includes baptism, which, as the first step of obedience, is shorthand for a life of sanctification. Baptism is not essential for salvation (only disbelieving leads to damnation), but it is part the gospel—as is all the truth revealed to us. Matthew makes this clear in his version: “All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age” (28:18-20).
- b. One of the great promises Christ made was to send the Holy Spirit, who will “lead you into all truth...guide you...He will show you...He shall glorify Me” (John 16:13-5). All truth? Not everything knowable, but everything we need to know. It can be rendered “the whole truth.”
- c. Thus the NT is like the law. It is construed as a completed unity, a singular body. Those who keep it, yet offend at one point, are guilty of all. How can that be? Because it is a unit. To violate any of it is to violate all of it. To say any of it is unimportant is to cheapen the entire Word. If we subtract, we deny its inerrancy. If we add, we deny its sufficiency. We cannot “cherry pick” the truths we like.
- d. Thus the common argument, “The Bible doesn’t say anything against this” will not work. All the truth is there, so the question is, “Where does the Bible support

this?” If we cannot find a biblical basis for a pet idea, then we can be sure that it is not a part of the whole counsel of God, and has no place in a NT church.

## 5. The Apostles’ Doctrine is a pattern to be followed exactly.

*According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it (Exodus 25:9)*

*And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount (Ex 25:40)*

*Ye...have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered (Romans 6:17)*

*Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 1:13).*

- a. Before a building is constructed, the architect draws a blueprint that specifies every feature of that building. The builder then makes it according to those specifications. In the tabernacle, God clearly specified the materials and furnishings to be used, and the way in which the building would function. There is only one divine pattern, and God expects His people to follow it exactly, even in the minutest details. Nothing is left to chance, nothing to the builder’s whim or imagination.
- b. The blueprint is a positive pattern to be followed exactly (Ex 25:9, 40; Nm 8:4).
  - a. The blueprint specifies form, furnishing, and function. “Son of man, describe the house to the house of Israel...and let them measure the pattern...make known to them the design of the house and its arrangements, its exits and its entrances, its entire design and all its ordinances, all its forms and all its laws. Write it down in their sight, so that they may keep its whole design, and all its ordinances, and perform them” (Ez 43:10-11).
  - c. It is no leap, therefore, to expect that God would have a pattern for His people to follow today. The NT is a mold (τύπος, Rm 6:17) into which we are poured, and a blueprint (ὑποτύπωμα, 2 Tm 1:13) we are to follow.
  - d. The local church is constructed according to a pattern (Acts 2: 42; 1 Cr 3:9, 16; 1 Tm 3:15). The blueprint’s features were introduced by the Lord Jesus (e.g. Mt 18:20), established by the Acts of the Apostles, and explained in the Epistles. We are to pattern our gatherings after what the apostles did and taught.

## 6. The Apostles’ Doctrine maximizes the glory of God.

- a. God designed the pattern to honor His Son; any departure diminishes that glory. The primary purpose of an assembly is to honor God. “Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thine house and the place where Thine honor dwelleth” (Ps 26:8).
- b. It is up to God—not to us—to decide what truly glorifies Him. “For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Is 55:9).
- c. The NT pattern honors the Father. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory for thy loving-kindness and for Thy truth’s sake (Ps 115:1)*. Christendom has turned from God-centered worship to man-centered therapy. So-called “worship” services are taken up with anything but true worship—giving to the Lord the glory due His Name and reveling in the beauty of His holiness (Ps 29:1-2).

- d. The NT pattern honors the Son by His people gathering in His Name alone (Mt 18:20), giving no titles or place to men (Mt 23:8-9), by acknowledging only one Pastor—the Chief Shepherd (1 Pt 5:4), and by displaying headship (1 Cr 11:2-12).
- e. The NT pattern honors the Holy Spirit by acknowledging that only He can add to the assembly (Ac 2:47), by recognizing that only He can appoint elders (Ac 20:28) and call to service (Ac 13:2), by teaching that only He distributes gifts and lead in their exercise (1 Cr 12:18,24,28), by acknowledging that He resides in the assembly (1 Cr 3:16), and by submitting to His presidency and leading in worship (1 Cr 14).