

Article 6 The Church

Dr. Jason Robertson | Huntington Beach Church

We are the church.

We are the church, the body of Christ, the elect of God, the Israel of God, the redeemed of every generation on mission until Jesus returns.

Chapter 6 of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 is our confession about our identity, the church.

It is a doctrine that we must proclaim, we must pursue, we must defend because it defines our identity, our mission, and our faithfulness to Christ and it reveals the glory of God.

Why?

Well, first of all, it centers the lordship of Christ over his church.

Jesus said in **Matthew 16**, *I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

The church is not ours to control. It's not ours to redefine. It's not ours to shape according to cultural trends. No, it belongs to Jesus Christ.

This doctrine proclaims the glory of the lordship of Christ.

Now, our local expressions are autonomous, but that autonomy is submissive to the lordship of Christ and His Word.

Without this doctrine in our confession, we may become another man-centered religion driven by the agendas of others other than the one who purchased us with his blood.

Number two, we must proclaim and defend this doctrine because it safeguards the purity of the church's witness, defining us as members of a baptized body, baptized believers.

We're not a social club. We're not a religious relic. We are a spiritual community, a redeemed family, a fellowship of baptized believers committed to Christ and his gospel.

In **Acts chapter 2**, we see that the early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship and to the breaking of bread and prayers.

We are bound together, devoted as a covenantal people with a shared faith that we must protect and proclaim.

If not, we will devolve into another brand of whitewashed religious hypocrites.

Third, we must proclaim and defend this doctrine because it promotes the mission of the church to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

The church is not just a gathering for worship and fellowship. It is that, but it's not just that. It is a sending community. Actively participating in the Great Commission.

Jesus commanded in **Matthew 28**, *go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you.*

Our mission is not optional. It is integral to the identity of the church, to our identity as a people. If we lose sight of this, we will perish.

Number four, we must proclaim and defend this doctrine because this doctrine promotes accountability.

In a world where accountability and love are scarce, this article of our confession promotes mutual submission, accountability, and care.

In other words, this doctrine protects us from both denominationalism and power-hungry men and women who think they can lead us better than Christ.

We must proclaim and defend this article of our confession or be in danger of being ruled over by the religious elite.

Number five, we must proclaim and defend this doctrine because this doctrine reflects God's wise design for church leadership by defining two offices of the church and their biblical qualifications.

These offices are not arbitrary, but are established in Scripture. The matters of this doctrine in our confession are not matters of cultural bias, but of biblical fidelity.

Our churches have debated the language of this particular article.

Why? Because doctrine matters.

Because God has established the structure for his church for his glory. Amen.

Finally, we must proclaim and defend this article of our confession because we must remember that our local churches are part of something greater, something that goes back and is as old as time itself including all the redeemed of every tribe, every tongue, people, and nation of every generation.

We belong to something greater than ourselves. God's plan of redemption throughout all of history, starting with Adam and Eve who were saved by grace through faith in Christ, continuing through a family on an ark, expanding as a holy nation, and now expressed as local congregations working together as the body of Christ to spread God's glory globally.

This magnificent vision is captured in **Revelation 7:9** where John sees us all, the multitude of every nation standing before the throne of God.

We are the church. We must treasure this doctrine.

I will close as well with a quote from our beloved Spurgeon who once said, "The church is the dearest place on earth to us. Let it be so for us today and forever."