

# The Doctrine of the Church:

## The Church Is Invisible, Yet Visible

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1. **“The *invisible* church is the church as God sees it.”** (Believers for all time). Those who are truly saved are “enrolled in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23). Jesus said to his apostles that their names “are written in heaven.” (Luke 10:20). In the final analysis, “only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:27) will be saved. Thus, “The Lord knows those who are his” (2 Timothy 2:19)
2. **“The *visible* church is the church as Christians on earth see it.”**
  - a. The visible church includes all who profess faith in Christ and give evidence of that faith in their lives. Not all who *profess* faith *possess* faith.
  - b. The New Testament letters are addressed to the visible church.
    - i. **“To the church of God that is in Corinth**, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:” (1 Corinthians 1:2, ESV)
    - ii. **To the church of the Thessalonians** in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.” (1 Thessalonians 1:1, ESV)
    - iii. Even when a letter is addressed to an individual, the church is still acknowledged: “To Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and **the church in your house:**” (Philemon 1–2, ESV)



### 3. Counterfeits

- a. Another Jesus (2 Cor 11:4): And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.” (Matthew 24:4–5)
- b. A Different Spirit - “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1)
- c. A Different Gospel - “There are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.” (Galatians 1:7)
- d. False Apostles (v. 13): The visible church will have false believers even among its official ranks beginning with the apostle Judas (also the treasurer [Jn. 13:29]).
- e. False Teachers - “There will be false teachers among you” (2 Peter 2:1) e.g. “Hymenaeus and Philetus, who [had] swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection [had] already happened. They [were] upsetting the faith of some.” (2 Timothy 2:17–18); Paul warned the Ephesian elders “that after [his] departure fierce wolves [would] come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.” (Acts 20:29–31).



f. False Brothers - In his missionary journeys, Paul faced “danger from false brothers” (2 Cor. 11:26 cf. Galatians 2:4). Others would abandon the faith; “For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica” (2 Timothy 4:10). “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.” (1 John 2:19)

Two Equal and Opposite Errors –

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”  
—C.S. Lewis in Screwtape Letters.

Concerning *discernment*, the C.S. Lewis’ principle can be extended to practices that usually pass as “discernment.”